THE MYSTIC 'PHONE

OR

WINNING A MILLIONAIRE

By

LOUISE VON HAFFNER

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By LOUISE VON HAFFNER

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Affectionately Dedicated

to my Uncle

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG COBB

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THE MYSTIC 'PHONE

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CHAPTER I.

FIFTY CHINA DOLLS.

JEAN RICHMOND was a girl just entering her teens when the Civil War broke out—the eldest daughter in a family of nine.

Her father, Clay Richmond, a tailor by trade, was a very devout man of Methodist persuasion. Brother Richmond was always among the first in church and about the last to leave.

When the minister needed a suit or new coat, Brother Richmond was the man always delighted to have the privilege of supplying the need.

It was Bible reading and prayer before breakfast, and evening prayer and Bible reading before retiring. At no time was Clay Richmond known to open the much-worn Bible until every member of the family was present. Should he glance over his "specs" and find one missing he quickly despatched another member to find the missing one, waiting patiently their return.

Jean was nothing if not original and independent. She never could regulate her time or her habits in harmony with others. If particularly interested in

anything, Jean never for a moment considered time. She was impulsive and romantic, always soaring for higher ideals and something out of the ordinary. None shouldered the responsibility of predicting just what she really would attempt next.

Clay Richmond's home was the "rendezvous" for ministers and their wives; in fact, the Methodist brethren in general. The table was always set, and provided with extra seating capacity for "some one" who might drop in just at the noon hour. There was always room for one more.

Invariably, when a large company of Methodist brethren and their wives appeared, Jean was sure to disappear. Mrs. Richmond would call and search the place without avail. Then she would instruct some of the smaller children to make a tour of the neighborhood and find Jean. "Oh, what a girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Richmond. "Always on the go just when she's most needed." The children not infrequently returned with the same old song: "Mamma, we can't find her." After searching everywhere, and at last giving up the idea of seeing her the rest of the day, her voice would ring out, "Hello!" Then a moment's silence, while the children, Mrs. Richmond and old "black mammy" looked in every direction to locate the voice. "Hello!" would sound again through the air. Then Jean would give a hearty laugh from the top of the cherry tree in the back yard, or some other equally ridiculous hiding place. Her ideas of life, even at this age, were pronounced. The world was here, and she was in it. All she had to do was do as

she pleased, which she invariably did—like a butterfly fluttering here, there and everywhere; no one knew just where. In school she cared only for books treating on astronomy, ancient history, Greek, Latin, and, by all means, mythology. Jean believed herself to be specially favored as a daughter of the gods, therefore, must study all pertaining to them. Grammar, spelling and arithmetic—bosh! what a lot of trouble! All very well for some, but too much of a humdrum for her. In one way or another Jean always had a score of engagements to fill after school ere going home. It was either across town with Jessie Stanley, or over on the hill to see Nettie Banks. This trio was inseparable, and matched up to a stripe. Where you saw one, the other two could be counted on as close seconds. "When shall we three meet again?" never bothered them. They were, as the town people expressed it, "The dare-devils of the town." Not in the sense of bad, but so mischievous. Both old and young had to be on the alert and watch closely, since this trio lived out their belief, that the calendar contained 365 joke and April-fool days for their special benefit. It was not surprising, then, when anything unusual occurred in school that the teachers never troubled themselves to look elsewhere, but quickly summoned the Banks, Richmond and Stanley syndicate (as they were called) to appear and answer the charge against them. It is needless to say they were always equal to the occasion with excuses. Somehow Jean always managed to know her lessons, though no one knew just how she did

it. She was always on the go, and never seen or known to pin her mind down to study. Her father would make her sit near his work-table each evening with her books. But one only had to watch Jean's countenance to know her mind was everywhere but on her studies. She knew, too, while her father was kind and good, she dare not leave that grammar, speller or arithmetic until the hour he gave for study was up.

In school the teachers encouraged the pupils to study by offering a prize of fifty cents each month to the one remaining head of their class the longest. Jean's efforts to win the prize were too spasmodic; she always came so near and yet so far. But on this one particular occasion Jean broke the record by surprising everybody and herself as well in winning the much-coveted prize. Her teacher made a little complimentary speech to the effect that "she hoped Jean would now come out victor each month." This caused a merry laugh among the pupils, although some will never understand how Jean Richmond, that wild "tomboy," won the prize when they studied so much harder.

As usual Jean had too many important engagements to fill ere going home. That was such an insignificant matter to consider. The house would not run away. She could go home any time.

Jean walked down town with a whole bevy of girls at her heels, each suggesting what she would buy if she had fifty cents. Their mouths began to water, and their eyes dilate, as Jean walked in the little candy

store with an air of one who knows. Of course each girl following in Jean's steps began to exercise her imagination as to the particular kind of candy she would select when invited to make her choice. But think you Jean Richmond was after candy? Not much! She called for the little "black tray" and contents exposed in the show window, and bought out the entire stock of fifty little china dolls, giving every girl in sight a doll. Her sister Millie had hurried home to tell the wonderful news, that Jean had actually won the prize. Mrs. Richmond could hardly believe it, and since Jean had not come home to verify the statement, she went about her household duties, thinking it only another report the children had circulated to tease Jean.

It was long past the evening meal when Mrs. Richmond, glancing at the mantel clock, exclaimed, "Eight o'clock, and Jean not home! Did I ever see such a girl, Joe?" Then, calling her eldest boy, a lad of nine years, she said, "Go, find your sister Jean, and tell her to come home at once." It had become an established fact that one of the younger Richmonds had to be kept on hand, more or less all the time, for the sole purpose of looking for Jean.

On this particular occasion Joe found his sister at Jessie Stanley's house, perfectly contented and enjoying herself. She had eaten supper with Nettie Banks, and intended dividing honors by staying all night with Jessie. However, upon second consideration, after seeing her brother, and receiving her mother's message, she decided it might be just as well to stay

another night with Jessie and return home, especially since they had gone to the trouble of sending for her.

In reaching home they heard Millie crying as though her heart would break. "I wonder what is the matter with Millie," said Jean.

"She's crying because every girl in school got a china doll but her," replied Joe as they entered the house.

Mrs. Richmond's first question was, "Well, lucky girl, I heard you won a prize, and presume you took the afternoon off to celebrate in your own special style. Will you allow us to see your prize?"

"I haven't got it," replied Jean, sheepishly, edging toward the door as though to gain an outlet in case of a storm, the importance of a prize just dawning upon her.

"You have no prize," exclaimed Mrs. Richmond; "why your brother and sister saw the teacher give you the prize. Now, Jean, what have you done with it?" continued her mother in astonishment.

"I spent it," replied Jean, covering her eyes with one arm.

"You spent your prize money!" cried Mrs. Richmond. "Why, Jeannie Richmond, what could you have spent your prize for?"

"For fifty little china dolls," simpered Jean.

"Oh, then, we can open a doll store, with fifty dolls to start business on," quickly replied her mother.

"I gave them away," hastily cried Jean, who by this time was shaking as though a chill had come over her.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Richmond, more surprised than ever, "you have neither prize nor dolls, and you remembered every schoolmate in town but your little sister."

"I did not see her," cried Jean.

"Yes, and you were too busy to come home, where you would find her," replied Mrs. Richmond. "Now, for your punishment you are to go right out after your breakfast to-morrow, and gather up every one of those dolls, take them back to 'Specklebug's' store and get your prize money. I'll teach you how to spend your prize before coming home first and telling your father and mother about it. I am really ashamed of you, Jeannie; just when I ought to feel most proud. Your teacher will think you greatly appreciated your prize, getting rid of it so soon," said Mrs. Richmond, as she left the room. It is hard to say whether Jean slept any that night or not.

Next morning found her out bright and early hunting china dolls she had only the day before given away with such a light and merry heart. She hardly knew which direction to start in first. Girls in school were easy to find. But girls out of school, especially the particular ones she wanted now, was another question.

Jean had gathered in fifteen dolls, and began to think it almost as easy as giving them away, until she struck against the sixteenth; then her troubles began.

Nettie Banks had traded off her doll to Rosie Dixon for some white lace to finish her big wax doll's dress. So Jean started across town after Rosie Dixon. On the way over she gathered in three dolls and more trouble, as along the route she found nearly all the

dolls had been traded off to such an extent it was hard to tell where all those fifty dolls really were traveling to.

Finally reaching Rosie Dixon's house, pretty well tired out, Jean found Rosie and another little friend up to their eyes in doll rags. Rosie had just finished the fourteenth dress for her china doll, "Angelia" by name.

"See! See, Jean!" exclaimed Rosie. "Isn't she cute?"

"Yes, Rosie, it is very pretty," replied Jean; "and if I had my way, Rosie, I'd give you fifty more dolls, rather than take that one from you."

"What! Take my doll? My 'Angelia?' Well, I guess not!" shouted Rosie, looking defiantly at Jean. "Why, I gave Net Banks all my nice white lace off my own Sunday petticoat for this dear little china doll. No, indeed, you haven't any mortgage on my doll, Jeannie Richmond. And I won't, just won't give it up. Besides," continued Rosie, "you didn't give it to me."

"No; but I bought them with my prize money," said Jean. "And mamma said I had to take them all back to 'Specklebug's' and get my money, just because I did not give my sister one."

"Well, you mean, old selfish thing, why didn't you give your sister one, and save all this fuss?" scornfully retorted Rosie.

"Because I did not see her when I was giving them away. I did not even keep one for myself," replied Jean.

Mrs. Dixon, overhearing the conversation, and

being an intimate friend of Mrs. Richmond, came out of her room, and, after learning the errand Jean was on, advised Rosie to give up the doll if there was any misunderstanding about it, saying, "I'll give you money to buy more dolls, Rosie, dear."

"Yes, mamma; but I've already named my dolly, and she's just getting used to her name," replied Rosie, tearfully.

"I am very sorry, Rosie, to have to ask you to give up the doll," interrupted Jean.

"Oh, you're not sorry at all!" snapped Rosie. "You're a mean, stingy old Indian giver, now. You never was used to anything but old rag dolls, anyway. There, take your old doll," throwing it at Jean. Rosie continued, much excited, "I don't want it," whispering to her companion, then looking at Jean. "It's no good anyway. One toe is broke off and the eyes don't match. Pshaw! I wouldn't have such a doll," said Rosie, spitefully. "I'll just go right over to Net Banks and get my lace."

Jean had now thirty-eight dolls, but where to find the other twelve was a mystery. Some had traded them off for hair-ribbon, candy, pictures, chewing gum, pickles, and one boy had given his harmonica to Ruth Billings for her doll, to give to his little crippled sister, and he wasn't going to let his sister give it up, for he heard Ruth had played all the music out of his harmonica, even blew the front piece off into the fireplace, and it was no good now, and he just wouldn't "swap" back.

It must be remembered these dolls were something

new in this little town. And Mr. "Specklebug," the children's candy friend, ordered only a few to see how they would take, displaying them in his show window the very day Jean won the prize, and she took them all. So there were none to be had outside of the fifty Jean had started in circulation.

Jean succeeded in gathering all the dolls but two. Presenting herself at "Specklebug's" store late in the afternoon, her heart fluttering like a bird, as she told Mr. "Specklebug" what her mother had commanded her to do as a punishment for not first coming home. "Specklebug" took the dolls as he threw the money at Jean, giving her a wild-man look and ordering her never to come in his store again with her foolishness. It is needless to say the experience taught Jean a lesson never to travel around doll stores with prize money and all the youngsters in town at her heels.

CHAPTER II.

WHY THE FIRST CHILD IS PECULIAR.

MRS. RICHMOND noticed Jean's little coral necklace which her aunt brought her from the West was missing. "Why, I'm quite sure she wore it to school the morning she won the prize. What could the child have done with it?" thought Mrs. Richmond, as she searched each bureau drawer. "Is it possible she has given that away, too?"

That evening Clay Richmond and his wife had a long talk regarding Jean.

"Indeed I do not know what to do with Jean," said Mrs. Richmond, opening up the conversation first. Her good heart will be the ruination of her yet. Why, the girl has no thought whatever of the value of things, or that she actually needs herself what she gives away. She just strikes up acquaintances at will. Everybody's her friend right from the start, and nothing pleases her better than to be giving, giving, giving all the time. "Why," continued Mrs. Richmond, much excited, "she would give her head off her shoulders if she could conveniently get it off. I did not tell you at the time, but it was only last week she marched home in all that rain barefooted."

"Barefooted!" exclaimed Clay Richmond, speaking for the first time since his wife began the conversation on the subject of Jean.

"Yes, barefooted!" replied his wife. "I said,

'Jeannie Richmond, where are your shoes and stockings?' 'Oh, I gave them to a poor little girl, mamma. Her papa died last week,' said Jean as innocently as though shoes grew on trees. And, Clay, no one knew anything about my new 'counterpane.' I hadn't even shown it to a neighbor yet. This morning I noticed when I went in the 'spare' room one whole side of my beautiful counterpane was ruined."

"What! A counterpane I paid $25 for, and only in the house two weeks?" exclaimed Clay Richmond, in utter astonishment.

"Literally ruined!" exclaimed Mrs. Richmond. "I took Millie and Joe straight to the room when they came in from school to see if they knew anything about it. Millie never saw the spread before, and when I showed where all the nice peacocks were cut out on one side, Millie exclaimed, 'O mamma, Rosie Dixon, Jessie Stanley, Net Banks and Jean have lovely big peacocks, just like those for book-marks.' You see, now, Clay Richmond, how destructive and bad Jean is. Indeed, I'm greatly worried about her," sighed Mrs. Richmond. "Something must be done."

"Well, scolding will do no good," said Clay Richmond, scratching his head thoughtfully. "And having a good heart must not be counted such a grievous fault. We'll just have to talk to Jean and teach her to use reason on when, where, and what to give. She is the most tender-hearted child we have, Jane, and you know the least thing wounds her feelings deeply. I know

she's a peculiar child in some respects, entirely different from the other children. She's bright and friendly; in fact, I hear it everywhere that everybody loves Jean. I try to scold her for things I see myself at times should be corrected, but in the end suffer more myself by doing so. We'll just have to correct her by kindness, and pray for light and knowledge in the matter."

"Yes, and while our eyes are shut praying for light she's giving away or damaging everything in sight," interrupted Mrs. Richmond.

"Well," continued Clay Richmond, in his droll way, "you must remember, Jane, the first child must not be held accountable for having ofttimes more peculiar traits than the other children that follow as the years pass. For, generally speaking, a woman, when first married, is dodging, hiding and keeping up a continual timid and false alarm, fearing that 'somebody's "peek-a-booing" at her every time she goes outside the door,' besides getting other queer notions in her head, such as how best to skip part of the twenty-eighth verse in the first chapter of Genesis. It's a great wonder to me that the first child comes to light looking like anything, either mental or physical."

"Oh, pshaw! More man theory! What's a woman going to do? She's either stamped as having too much 'false modesty,' or being bold and brazen. Of the two evils, I prefer the former," proudly asserted Mrs. Richmond, as she continued, "You know, Clay Richmond, the Bible says, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' Jean needs a rod, if anyone ever did."

"Yes, I know all that," bluntly replied her husband.

"But Jean isn't a bad child. She's simply quick and impulsive. She's the best child we've got in many respects. If anyone is sick Jean's the first to run her feet off, if need be, or sit up all night to help anyone. And I tell you, Jane, that is when we can, or ought to, appreciate a kind turn most. When we're down sick, unable to help ourselves, even the hand of a child contains the power of a lion. No, Jean is not a bad child," repeated Clay Richmond, thoughtfully, wiping a tear from his eye, as a picture flitted across his memory of some little deed of kindness Jean had done, and which he did not mean to erase while life should last.

"Jean is all right, but her good heart will have to be curbed in some way. Every beggar in town has her spotted as an easy mark. Something will have to be done," sternly spoke Mrs. Richmond, bringing one foot down impatiently on the floor.

Thus would Clay Richmond and his wife often drift into conversation regarding their eldest child. The other children seemed apparently manageable on the "good heart" subject. They were only too glad to get all they saw coming, and hold out their hands for more.

Things ran on in this style until Jean was twelve years of age, when suddenly everything was thrown in wild confusion by the outbreak of war between the States. The peaceful influence of the past was changed as in the twinkling of an eye. Clay Richmond's house, like many others, large and roomy, was taken for army quarters. It was no time now to

discuss how to raise children, but how best to protect them and oneself from the flying shot and shell. In many cases this task was left to women, who heretofore knew nothing regarding cares or responsibilities. But now fathers, husbands and brothers were all carrying a musket, and they had to shoulder the cares of home and do the very best they could under the varied circumstances. But history long since recorded the heroic deeds and bravery of the Southern women.

Mrs. Richmond had given almost everything out of her storehouse to feed the army, when an order came to her for more salt. She had only one fifty-pound sack left, so she decided to reserve a pitcherful for her own family use. As she was about to leave the storehouse a soldier appeared, pointing his bayonet at her, with the command, "Drop that pitcher you d—— rebel." It is needless to say she dropped the pitcher, and no doubt would be running yet had not her husband met her in her sudden flight through the hall, making for her room in a terror-stricken state. The sentry, a pert young chap, was reported, and justly reprimanded for his gross insult, which he claimed to be only a joke to frighten the woman.

Jean just thrived on excitement. It suited her nature and style. The soldiers, the uniforms and brass buttons, all had a glitter-glary style of life she liked. Just the age to see and pick the romantic side from the serious conditions now prevailing around her home.

It is needless to state Jean Richmond and Nettie Banks were prime favorites. Jessie Stanley's people

had "refugeed." So she was not there to enjoy what Jean and Nettie called "the time of their life." The Northland lads were fighting 'gainst the Southland sons, but this did not bar the many love glances cast at large toward the fair daughters of the sunny clime, in many cases terminating in matches, which, let us hope, proved all love matches.

Little did Clay Richmond think one of his daughters would choose a "blue coat." But, as usual, his favorite, wilful, good-hearted Jean decided to cast her lot, not only with a "blue coat," but one whose native home was across the "briny" deep. But fighting for the Stars and Stripes and winning one of the State's fair daughters, he claimed, with the vast crowd, his relationship of "nephew" to Uncle Sam.

CHAPTER III.

JEAN'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

How sad to view the wretched scene,
In life's despondent link;
We meet, we pass upon the green,
But speak not what we think.

THE war was over, and Jean Richmond was really married. Only too short was her dream of love. What! Love? Shall we call it love, or the sudden awaking from a wild hypnotic influence induced by the glitter-glary show of army life upon a mind seeking versatility? A child yet, both in years and experience, Jean had many lessons to learn. Never reared to feel the cares or responsibilities of home, it seemed a pretty hard task now to settle down in earnest and study realities; especially since her husband, Robert Nash, seemed in no particular hurry to leave his father-in-law's good home and take chances by engaging in any active business on his own responsibility, knowing Jean had a good home, with "Welcome" standing out in bold letters on the door mat, and hospitality the keynote inside.

Clay Richmond had given his daughter a home on one of the prettiest sites in town, commanding from all sides a charming view of the surrounding country. Here, he hoped, his daughter would be very happy in a little home independently her own. But alas! it was void of one thing her old father did not see until later years—the love that time cannot erase.

It was a little over a year when, one Sunday night, while the wind howled and the rain beat down in torrents, a wee, little stranger came into Jean's life and home—her first-born, a son. Always overjoyed to greet newcomers, how her heart must have leaped with joy at the sound of this little cherub's voice—the crowning gift of love, the light that leads us up to better, brighter worlds. But Jean, poor child! her ideals and hopes were shattered. The love that makes life one perpetual dream of bliss was missing. Her joy was nipped in the bud. A proud-spirited girl tied to a man who never concerned himself whether the girl he had married was properly cared for. It never occurred to him that while his wife cared for their children and home it was his duty, and should be his pleasure, to see that they were properly provided for. Fortunately for Jean, her mother was the "angel" that supplied and looked after her very needs. When Jean or her baby needed things Mrs. Richmond would only sigh, and tell Jean to go to the "store" and order what she wanted. Her father would settle all in with his family account.

All was well with Jean until her mother died. Then, as the demand for incidentals presented themselves, with nothing to supply the deficiency, no mother to confide in, Jean realized for the first time the important part her mother played in her married life. Jean was now about seventeen years of age, with two children. She had never gone to her father for anything; her mother saw her needs, and, without communicating the news to her husband, supplied

them. And in this manner Clay Richmond naturally supposed Robert Nash was caring for his little family as he should do.

It would take old Mrs. O'Reef, who nursed and cared for Jean in her sickness, to give Robert Nash a dressing down, which she did very often, leaning with her head and arms hanging over the back fence, enjoying a little gossip with her neighbors.

"I tell ye, Mrs. O'Neely. I say, says I, any gintleman who claims any manhood at all ought to consider it not only his duty, says I, but feel a proide in caring for his family. If this proide is lacking, there's no heart in such a schamp. He's below the brute. For sure ye know, Mrs. O'Neely, the brute has the affectionate instinct for their little 'brutlets' that ought to shame a two-legged schamp like Bob Nash."

"Yes, yes," responded Mrs. O'Neely; "and the loike av him talking superior intelligence. He's a selfish incubator that ought to be on the condemned list."

"Indeed ye are right," interrupted Mrs. O'Reef. "Nothing short of a harem would suit the loikes av his stoile. It would be a wise idea to suggest the loikes av Bob Nash being banished to the 'Kingdom av Ashantee.' Ye've heard av the place, I'm sure."

"I have, then," replied Mrs. O'Neely; but me memory's short on long shtories."

"Sure, don't ye moind," exclaimed Mrs. O'Reef. "It's where the 'sovereigns' have several thousand wives, all av whom, with his principal men, are shlain at his death, that they may be his servants in the next world."

"Glory above!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Neely. "Where did ye iver read such a shtory? It's a wonderful memory ye have, Mrs. O'Reef. Now, for meself, I reads many things in me Farmer's Almanac, but me brain must be loike a sifter, for nothing shtays in it."

"Bridget! O Bridget, where are ye?"

"Glory above! There's me man, Mike, home for dinner, Mrs. O'Reef, and not a morsel shtarted. There'll be fire in his brain instead of the stove if I don't be moving away from this fence. Good-bye! Yes, I'll see ye after dinner."

Jean had been married six years, and three chubby youngsters claimed her undivided attention. Jean had many friends who loved her dearly. But it nearly broke her heart having to live among her old associates with a husband who would not, at least did not, make some attempt to provide for his family. She tried very hard to keep all these feelings from her father. But at last, driven to desperate measures, she took her three children home one afternoon while Robert Nash was away enjoying a "game fight" with his friends.

"Well, Jean," exclaimed her father, going out to the gate as Jean and her little ones entered. "I'm so glad you found time to come and bring the children. I was getting real lonesome to see you, child, although I heard from you. Robert was here yesterday and took dinner with us, and said you were all well, as far as he knew; hadn't heard you complain."

"Yes, starving well," interrupted Jean. "Little does he concern himself about his wife or children. Father,

I've just made up my mind never to live with Bob Nash again. It's nothing but children year after year, and poverty," sobbed Jean, throwing her arms round her father's neck and crying like a child.

Clay Richmond was so surprised and deeply touched; tears stood in his blue eyes as his poor little wilful Jean clung like a shipwrecked child to his neck and sobbed. Never had he, her father, dreamed of the tempest and storm hidden away in the depths of her young heart.

Smoothing back her hair and kissing her white forehead, Clay Richmond could hardly speak. But in broken sobs he began, "Jean, dear, what is the trouble? Tell me child. I always thought you and Robert got along all right. You never said anything to me, child."

"No," interrupted Jean. "I always had mother to go to, but now—she's—" and the poor girl, unable to finish the sentence, threw her head on her father's shoulder and wept pitifully, as though her heart would break, as did her father also.

Finally he aroused himself and spoke. "Well, stay right here, child, in your old home. You and your children have a home with your father, Jean; remember that, child. You and the little ones are as welcome as the flowers in May."

"I do not want to remain home, father, and cause more expense on your head," replied Jean. "If you'll only care for the children I'll go out and make my way, and pay their way, too, until I can do better."

"What! Work? You, my frail darling! You who

have always had a good home until this cruel war blighted everything. No, no! thrice no!" exclaimed her father, much excited. "My Jean, you my child, are not used to work. You know nothing about the hardships of the great outer world and the danger-pits along the way to ensnare the unwary. Can't Robert support his family," anxiously inquired Clay Richmond, "without your having to resort to this cruel measure? Ah, child!" suddenly cried Clay Richmond, "there's room for you all, not only in my house, but in my heart. I can help you," pleaded Jean's father, unwilling to see her go out in the world to battle with life's storm.

"No, father, you keep the children. I'm going to try to support myself and them. Now, do not tell Bob Nash where I am. And, above all, do not let him take my children," anxiously pleaded Jean. "I am yours, they are mine; so remember, father."

CHAPTER IV.

JEAN LEAVES HOME.

It was a bright, sunny morning in June. The birds were singing gaily. Even the flowers, aside from shedding their fragrance on the air, were waving and nodding a welcome to the beautiful morn. Jean tripped down the street. Ah! the same old street she and the merry town girls used to tramp from school. But now, how changed was everything? She had gone but a short distance, when suddenly seized with a fear that Bob Nash might return, and, finding her gone, would retaliate by "kidnapping" the children. Hastily retracing her steps, she decided it would not be half so hard having them with her as leaving them behind and constantly worrying as to their safety. She returned to give her old father another surprise. Despite his pleadings Jean took her children with her to a small town not fifty miles away. Her purse was not flush with money. It never had been during her married life. Months passed without her having a ten cent piece to call her own. But having a wonderful lot of grit and determination, this served quite well, as will be seen. Going to a small family hotel, Jean engaged board for herself and children. This was the first bold step for one without money. But, as usual, Jean made friends right in the start. And well for her that she could adapt herself to circumstances. Mrs. Boggs, proprietor of the hotel, was

completely captivated with Jean's style. She was not in the house three days before Mrs. Boggs began picking herself to pieces in a very dissatisfied manner. She felt more convinced than ever since Captain Boggs' death that she would have to make some radical change in her personal appearance. She and the captain had labored all their life to make and save. Now he had died without having the opportunity of enjoying any of their vast wealth. They had lived within themselves, with only one motto before them night and day: "Save money!" No children. Nothing to live for but money. No one felt sufficiently interested to suggest the word "style" to Mrs. Boggs. But since the captain's death she often found herself longing for something different from hotel life. What wouldn't she give to look like Mrs. Nash. Other guests were equally charmed with the striking little "widow," as Jean was termed throughout the hotel. And who could ask for nicer children? She does not only know how to wear clothes, but how to rear children as well.

Jean Nash was not a handsome woman. But there was something very striking about her manner. Ambitious to make her way this enthusiasm illumined her whole countenance. Looking up business was somewhat of a novelty to Jean. She had not settled on any particular occupation as yet. She was anxious to enter into whatever proved most profitable financially.

Jean possessed wonderful ideas, but knew well it required money to execute them. She was a clever

artist in painting and drawing, as well as an expert with the needle. She had given the latter subject little thought as a permanent occupation, fearing it might not prove best for her health, which must be considered. However, Mrs. Boggs made her such an unexceptional good offer, she undertook the task of reconstructing that lady's style. So successful was her undertaking others prevailed upon her to take them in charge and do likewise. Thus Jean found herself unexpectedly thrown in the very business she deemed unwise to enter, and soon had a flourishing business that promised to increase each week. Jean soon learned she could not attend to all herself, and had to seek other hands to help.

In the meantime another business woman, a Mrs. Millet, stopping in the same hotel, did not have much to say, but watched Mrs. Nash's progress with keen interest, knowing from all appearance Jean had struck the right keynote in business. In conversation one evening with Jean, Mrs. Millet suggested the idea that they both enter in a partnership business together. Jean took time to consider the matter, and, liking Mrs. Millet's business qualities, consented to do so in the fall.

While glancing over the morning papers Jean noticed the following ad:

"Notice to tailors. Offers received on contract work for firemen's new coats."

The lowest estimate received so far was ten dollars. Jean had by this time established quite a feeling of confidence within herself. Thinking the subject over

deeply, without consulting anyone, Jean sent word to headquarters that she would undertake the contract for eight dollars apiece. She was invited to show a sample of her work.

Jean, knowing her father knew the trade from start to finish, hurriedly took the first train for home. It was late in the evening when she arrived, but her father was still working away at his machine, finishing some extra work. Jean rushed in all out of breath.

"Howdy do?" she cried, "I'm in a great hurry. Are you busy?"

"Well, yes," replied Clay Richmond, looking up in astonishment, after Jean had released her arms from his neck.

"You must stop long enough to teach me something about tailoring," continued the girl.

"Jean, what's the matter? What can you mean being in such an excited state? You are now on the verge of nervous prostration?" calmly remarked Clay Richmond, looking over his "specs" in utter astonishment at his daughter.

"Oh, nothing," replied Jean. I'm nerve-proof, father. I'm very busy; not a moment to spare idly. You must show me how to cut and fit, and how to put a coat together to-night."

"Jean, child, you are unreasonable," exclaimed her father. "My child, don't you know it takes months to learn properly what you imagine can be acquired in a few hours?"

"Father," interrupted Jean, "I have got to be back in the morning at my post of duty. My children

and I would starve to death waiting for me to learn details. All I want is the most important points in a business," continued Jean; "and I've got to learn them to-night."

"What! To-night?" exclaimed her father.

"To-night," calmly replied Jean.

Clay Richmond got down his square and chalk, beginning in a half-dazed manner to explain this, that, and the other—how that lap goes, how this seam turns. He could not clearly comprehend or understand his daughter's actions. Taking up a coat, and about to explain its make-up, he glanced over his "specs," again inquiring, "Jean, I hope you are not undertaking tailoring to any extent without more knowledge of the business. You might do a little repairing. Otherwise, you'll ruin somebody's clothes and get yourself in trouble."

"Father," interrupted Jean, "I've no time to borrow trouble, or cross bridges before coming to them. I've my children to support, and must take chances like others, when they're thrown in my way," continued Jean, as she twisted and turned a coat looking for difficult points to be enlightened on.

"That is very true, my child," sighed her father. "But it's not so difficult to make women's clothes, as trimmings, bows and lace can cover a multitude of defects. As yet no provision has been made to cover up crooked seams and defects in men's clothes. You had better stick to women's clothes."

"Why, father, you dear, foolish man," interrupted Jean, "I've got to know how to put a coat together

to make the 'Essex' firemen's coats for the coming parade."

"O Jean!" exclaimed Clay Richmond, sinking in a chair, the cold perspiration standing on his brow. "How can you be so daring, child, undertaking such difficult tasks without serving a trade? Child, child! What can you mean?"

"My children all have healthy appetites," replied Jean. "They'd starve to death while I sit down to learn a trade. I need, and my children need things. And it is this driving necessity and my pride that urges me on to surmount obstacles I find in the way. I have said I could take that contract, and I'm going to take it," proudly asserted Jean as she leaned over her father's chair, giving him an affectionate kiss, remarking, "If I find any 'Chinese' puzzles about the work I'll come right down for you to help me out. You would help me, father, wouldn't you?"

"I will, my child, I will," answered Clay Richmond as he watched her retreating figure leave the door, where she halted long enough to throw him a parting kiss.

Jean was quick and bright. She did not have to be told the second time how to do anything. She worked faithfully three weeks with her little army of workers, and finished the twelve coats, not only receiving a compliment on her work, but the distinction of being the first woman to receive a like contract from the city. This went far to increase Jean's business. It was fall. She and Mrs. Millet had leased their place and entered business together. It was no

time before everybody was talking about the "Nash-Millet" establishment. Everything they undertook or introduced in trade was a success. Even in social circles their popularity was evident. But in all phases of life clouds sometimes rise and obscure the sunshine of success and happiness. Very often just when we begin to think the rain and clouds have all passed over, and after storm and tempest we are once more privileged to enjoy a little of the bright sunshine in our life, then it is something will arise to thwart our plans, convincing us of the fleeting change all flesh is heir to, and the folly of pinning our hopes and aspirations too high on material things. Thus with Jean Nash, after rugged perseverance, pulling herself and children out of the gutter of despair, disappointment and starvation that Bob Nash left them in. Now on the broad thoroughfare of success, where she can look upon the work of her own hands and see her children properly clothed and fed, with a sigh of relief and a prayer of thanksgiving on her lips, Jean closed her eyes to dream of their future.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. MILLET SHOWS HER TEMPER.

ROBERT NASH, hearing of his wife's success, looms up just when prospects look the brightest; being Jean's husband and the father of her children, he thinks he has the right to share some of the profits. And Jean, good-hearted Jean, was willing to forgive for her children's sake as she witnessed their joy over seeing their papa. Not so with Mrs. Millet, who, by the way, was as stanch a woman suffragist as ever stepped in shoe leather. Strong was her denunciation of the man who neglected his family. But, stars above! It was well worth a dollar to hear her expound views on a man returning to share the fruits of a wife's hard labor.

"You are on your feet now, and can help yourself," exclaimed Mrs. Millet, "and here he comes sneaking around to pull all your good work down again. I'll stick to you and the little ones in business alone. But I'll be 'gingersnap' if I strike another lick with that scalawag around.

"You're an unprincipled scoundrel," continued Mrs. Millet, looking straight at Robert Nash, "or you'd never show your brazen face."

"These are my children and my wife. Who has a better right around here than I?" curtly replied Bob Nash, as he lit his cigar and continued, "if you do not like my face get out yourself." So he hung his

hat up as unconcerned as though he was the entire business. Mrs. Millet quit, as she declared she would when he came in. She was a strong, enduring character, good-hearted and thoroughly reliable. What she promised to do was as good as done. Her education was limited. She had no accomplishments or polish, as she often declared. But her daughter — ah! she should have all the education and advantages possible, necessary to make a social hit. If she had missed everything herself but hard work, Clara must make a social hit in marriage to redeem her from her mother's fate. Unknown to anyone she boarded Clara away at one of the most fashionable hotels, with a maid, and dressed in the height of fashion. Under no circumstance would she allow Clara to recognize her anywhere in public. Clara had already captivated one of the richest young men in town. And her mother did not intend spoiling matters by appearing on the scene. So she kept in the background, sending Clara sufficient money each week to royally defray her expenses. We'll hear more about Clara later.

It was just one year since Bob Nash took up his abode as figurehead in his family again. Jean Nash had, through illness, lost most of her old trade, and not able half the time to attend to business had made no new customers. To make matters worse the stork again hovered over her head. All her former ambition seemed to have left, and now almost completely disheartened she could do nothing but wait patiently—wait the result that unavoidable circumstances had thrust upon her as this man's legal wife. Broken in health

and spirit the trade that she and Mrs. Millet worked so untiringly to establish that she might independently maintain herself and children, was now all swept away as in a night, leaving her helpless again. Despite Mrs. Millet's harsh feeling toward Robert Nash, she could not bridge over the attachment that had sprung up in her heart for Jean and the children, and would often drop in to see them.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Millet, walking in one afternoon, and seeing the distress that Jean was in, "this is what civilized people call justice. Hum! Justice! Compelled by law to bear children to a man who neither concerns himself regarding their support or shelter. Hum! And this is really legalized justice! Do not look for anything better," continued Mrs. Millet, much excited, "but a race of criminals and suicides as long as these conditions prevail. These are the conditions breeding discontented minds that afterward prey upon the social sphere. Though before the throne of a just God they will be shown mercy in their weakness, for He will trace the evil back to its origin. Divorce, counted a curse, is a godsend to such mismatched, patched-up unions. The social question will ever continue to be a social problem unsolved as long as women are forced to be such legal slaves. But if slaves they must be, through the order of creation to multiply and replenish the earth, then let the government they live under in whatever clime, pension the women who honorably bear children, and not shout 'liberty' from ocean to ocean until they are hoarse, while these real 'burden-

bearers' go reeking throughout liberty's land, not only weighed down with pain and suffering, but, in many instances, forced to earn, at laborious labor, the very morsel that retains the breath of life in their frail body, and supposed to fan and nourish the wee spark of life entrusted to their keeping, which will glow into an animated mind for good or evil. Every woman who bears a child deserves a pension. They are the brave, the real martyrs, the true soldiers of life."

"O Mrs. Millet!" interrupted Jean, "you ought to have been a man. I'm sure you'd made a fine statesman, and had us poor women all pensioned shortly after Eve's family began to multiply and replenish the earth."

"No, I don't want to be a man, unless it was to give Bob Nash a good, sound thrashing for inflicting all this unnecessary trouble on you. Here you are," continued Mrs. Millet, much excited, "just where he left you before, only worse; another wee mite thrown in for good measure. Well, I've scolded enough for this time. Good-bye! Oh, I came near forgetting this nice basket of fruit I brought for you and the little ones! I'll step in again to see you. Good-bye!"

Jean's nurse, Mary McGinty, was a rough, coarse woman, acting her part as though it was nothing more than natural for things to be all contrariwise instead of right, there being nothing refined or sympathetic in her nature. Jean was slow in gaining strength—so slow, it was necessary for her to return to her old home, where, having her own little home in the country, would save rent until her health returned sufficiently to enter busi-

ness again. Too independent to depend on her old father for everything, Jean tried to support herself and family, including an indolent husband. She did not mind the work if business was good. It kept her mind occupied. But it seemed with Jean one trouble never came single. Not strong herself, and her baby sick, Robert Nash was seized with a sudden crop of energy to take up his grip and leave, on pretense of looking up business in more prosperous quarters. Again Jean was left to carry the burden alone.

She was seated at the machine, trying to finish some work, when her husband entered the room, informing her of his intentions to leave. As no previous conversation had taken place between them on this subject, Jean was completely unnerved. Nor did her emotions change Bob Nash from leaving her, with her head and arms resting on the machine, passing out the door without a kiss or good-bye for the woman who had suffered so much for him and forgiven so often. In the yard his children played, unmindful of the great mental battle raging within. "Be good children," he said, "and I'll bring you a stick of candy." On he passed out of the yard and out of their life, as we shall learn later.

Jean wept; she knew not how long. Not that she was losing anything in the way of financial support. She herself supported the family. And with it all Robert Nash had earned the name of being mean and stingy regarding every household expenditure, until the cook at times grew frantic. He'd count the potatoes, and the cook repeatedly avowed he'd sit on the flour

sack for fear she would run off with some flour between meals. No, his going was no great financial loss to either his family or the town. But the bitterness of poor Jean's anguish was in the thoughts of her husband, the father of her children, walking off as cool and unconcerned as though he was merely going downtown to order more potatoes to count and more flour to sit on.

Finally, rousing herself and remembering the unfinished work, her nerves all unstrung, she started at her task again. She had sewed only a short time when the children heard a piercing scream, and, running in the house, followed by their good neighbor, Mrs. O'Reef, who at a glance saw that Jean had fainted, and, upon close inspection, found she had run the machine needle through her thumb, and her hand lay imprisoned and bleeding. Quick as a flash Mrs. O'Reef unscrewed the needle, giving it one powerful pull, which brought Jean to, only to hear her children screaming like Indians over their mother's hurt.

Jean's hand, crippled by this accident, and her nerves all shattered, it is needless to say she was unfit for any kind of work for several weeks. Her babe, poor little, fretful mite! grew worse, and finally died. Despite Jean's troubles and hard struggle to support her little family, her mother love could not willingly give up even one of her little flock. With her health almost shattered, Jean found she could not alone keep the little home. It was a hard battle. Not a line from Robert Nash, either good, bad, or indifferent, since leaving his family destitute again, to root, hog, or die.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. MILLET'S AND CLARA'S SOCIAL HIT.

MRS. MILLET'S husband died in battle, leaving her no means of support for herself and child. The war, just ended, she now had to face the problem of bread-winner alone as best she could. She realized the startling facts that hard work faced her plainer than anything else. What occupation would prove most profitable she hardly knew. She had never worked hard at home, and going out in the world as a wage-earner was a new phase she would have to grow accustomed to. After washing and tucking little Clara snugly away in bed, Mrs. Millet would sit down and think very hard of her plight, and how war had suddenly put a blight in her life by taking her husband away. "Ah!" sighed Mrs. Millet, "how he would pet and love the baby, weaving bright castles in the air as to her future! Now all was changed; not even a trace of the castle in the air. All was a bubble that vanished from sight as the last sound of the battle-cry died away. But, thank God, I have Clara!" continued Mrs. Millet, in her loneliness. "She will be my star of hope to illumine the dark way."

This thought seemed to be a great solace to Mrs. Millet. As she contemplated the scene a picture rose before her of friends, where father, husband, brothers, sons, home, and everything had been swept away.

Out of these deep reveries Mrs. Millet made up her

mind to do the best she could and whatever she could until finding the most profitable occupation, then pursue its course and educate Clara. She first started out taking the agency for a machine. Early and late Mrs. Millet was seen canvassing around in small towns for orders. Indeed, it was no unusual sight to see her lifting machines in and out of wagons. If curiosity prompted you to inquire why she hired no help for such laborious work she would quickly inform you that expenses were too high and had to be kept down. Year in and year out Mrs. Millet labored in this field. Little Clara was kept boarding in a very fashionable part of town as Clara Langley, her middle name only. No one suspected the poor machine woman was Clara's mother. When Clara was fourteen years old Mrs. Millet sent her off to a fashionable boarding school, where she remained until eighteen. The four years had passed, and it was now time for Clara to finish school. When Mrs. Millet paid her last visit to the school it was then she gave Clara the "orders" she was to follow in regard to living at the fashionable "Hotel Urbanno," instructing her regarding how she was to receive her money. "And, above all, Clara, you are not to recognize me in public owing to my occupation."

"O mamma," interrupted Clara, "how can you ask such a sacrifice of me?"

"It is just because I love you, Clara, dear, that I sacrifice my feelings for your good. I know better than you, dear," continued Mrs. Millet. "You must make a social hit by marrying well. Therefore, obey

your mother, dear in this, and all will be well. You are highly educated, accomplished, handsome; in fact, there is nothing, dear, in the way to prevent your making a great social hit. Do this for your mother's sake," pleaded Mrs. Millet. "Every week your money will come to you. See to it, dear, that your clothes are the latest and the best; in fact, ahead of the style. And, if need be, dear, you will go to Europe."

"O mamma!" interrupted Clara, "you do not know what you are asking of me. I'd be so much happier in a little home with you!"

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Mrs. Millet. "You must make a social hit, and if a trip abroad is necessary, you must go. It's caste, caste, caste, you know, Clara, dear, one must have."

So within two weeks' time Miss Langley was installed in beautiful apartments in "The Urbanno." Of course Dame Rumor at once stamped her as an "heiress" left with all kinds of money. Thus Mrs. Millet would hear people commenting on the handsome Miss Langley at "The Urbanno." Under no circumstance would she allow her mother pride in such a beautiful daughter to betray itself. All she could think of was that Clara must make a social hit—a brilliant marriage. Regular as the weeks came Clara received her check. She had not only charmed, as was previously stated in our story, the richest young man in town, but the wealthy mining capitalist, Carlton Barnie from Australia.

Clara made herself agreeable with everyone she met. Her manner was always pleasing. It is needless to say

she was a favorite with all in the hotel. She seemed extremely fond of Carlton Barnie. But the same could be said regarding her manner toward Ralston Newbanks. No one could quite guess which one really would be the lucky suitor. Carlton Barnie was so extremely in love, and treated her so very kind. But the same can be said of young Newbanks, the railroad president's son and only heir.

Clara knew her mother favored the capitalist from Australia. He was several times a millionaire in his own right, and did not have to wait for "dead man's shoes."

Clara had been out driving through the park with Ralston Newbanks, and was just returning when Carlton Barnie was seen leaving the hotel by the southern driveway. At the cross streets they met face to face. Carlton Barnie's face flushed scarlet as he raised his hat and returned their salute. He had on several occasions openly avowed his dislike for Ralston Newbanks. Not that Ralston had ever given him any cause, other than seeking Miss Langley's company.

"He knows I am your company. Why does he persist in hanging around?" Carlton would often say in a fit of jealousy.

"Why, Ralston and I went to high school together," Clara would reply. "How very foolish of you, Carlton, to hold a grudge against Ralston because of our old 'alma mater' friendship!"

"Well, it's all right to cherish 'alma mater' friendship and schoolday friends," interrupted Carlton; "but

some fellows are after more than keeping up 'alma mater' ties when they hang around like Newbanks. They're after the tie that binds."

But what could he do or say? Miss Langley was not as yet really betrothed to him, and therefore was at liberty to choose her company or go and come at will. Thus Carlton Barnie meditated alone. The question was, which one did she really love? If she would only make some distinction a fellow might know which horse to gamble on. But this way of— "Oh, well, I'm going to find out. A woman can appear madly in love, making a man believe a great deal, and really mean nothing at all. Now, at times I almost believe that girl worships me," mused Carlton, half smiling. "And I, fool like, just simply lose my head and adore her, when I'm suddenly brought to my senses again by the appearance of Ralston Newbanks, who claims her attention for several days, while I stand around feeling as though I was somewhere near the North Pole, with a wet blanket thrown on, while he—yes, I must swallow it all as innocent 'alma mater' friendship. No, my fair Clara, I'll learn this very evening the truth. It has got to be either Carlton Barnie or 'Alma Mater' Newbanks. I'll not fool around in the distance until a 'knot' is tied in the rope of that 'alma mater' friendship. Then, Carlton Barnie, you can play tag in the game of catching another girl. Oh, no; I'll learn the truth to-night!"

Almost in despair of winning the variable, though stately, Clara, Carlton Barnie decided to risk learning his fate. Calling at the "Urbanno," he found Clara

alone, seated in one of the small rustic pavilions near the lake. She had been reading, but the book lay carelessly on the bench half opened, while she gazed out on the lake in deep thought, not hearing anyone approach.

"Ah, Clara!" ejaculated Carlton, as he drew near her side. "In deep thought? I trust they are pleasant scenes passing through your mind."

"Oh!" exclaimed Clara, "I did not see or hear you coming."

"Ah! I trust I have not disturbed your pleasant reverie," interrupted Carlton.

"Not at all," responded Clara. "I was just watching the firefly in the twilight, and the merry children out there on the lake. Just see them, how happy they are!"

"Well, I think myself a row on the lake more pleasant than sitting here," said Carlton, as he took Clara's arm and led her to where they entered a boat for an hour's row. On their return Carlton escorted Clara to a pleasant seat on the veranda, beneath the huge palm plants, both listening to the soft strains of music floating up from the pavilion below, where gaily attired dancers amused the guests whirling in and about in their fantastic dance. Clara broke the silence by saying, "I believe the music hath charmed me."

"Was it the music?" quickly inquired Carlton. "I judged something was claiming your attention. I spoke a moment ago, but you were lost in thought, and did not hear me."

"O Carlton, forgive my apparent rudeness!"

exclaimed Clara. "I really did not hear you. What did you say? Tell me now, I am all attention, dear."

"What! That last word! Repeat it again, my darling, and tell me you really mean that I am 'dear' to you in every sense of the word," hastily spoke Carlton, taking Clara's hand in his.

"Did you really forgive my rudeness in not being more attentive just now?" inquired Clara.

"You are pardoned, my darling, a thousand times," responded Carlton. "I would forgive you always, even though the offense were ten times greater. You are perfection itself."

"Oh, you are kind!" replied Clara. I do not deserve your goodness."

"Indeed, fair one," hastily spoke Carlton. "It is you who showers your goodness in my path. I should be content, I know, to bask in the sunshine of your sweet smiles. But I ask more, Clara, dear. This beautiful hand, a priceless gift to man from his Maker, into whose keeping will it fall?" continued Carlton, implanting a kiss thereon. I am sure, darling, you have not been blind to my love, even though you feign indifference. You know I love you. Tell me there is hope; yes, more than hope. Tell me that you love me and will be mine, darling."

"O Carlton! You do not mean to imagine me so rude as to play a role of indifference to your kindness," hastily replied Clara.

"Do not call it kindness on my part, darling; it is love, love, holy love, undefiled," responded Carlton. "And since you have no knowledge of being indifferent

to my love I am happier, then, in believing you are innocent of giving offense. It was I who judged you wrongly. But, darling, every look you give another is as a knife thrust into my heart. I love you so madly. Tell me, now, Clara, that you really love me and will intrust this little hand into my keeping. No wish of your heart shall be ungratified. Tell me, darling, you will be mine. Let me close my eyes to-night, knowing I have won the brightest star in the galaxy of brilliant social lights. Tell me that you love me, darling. I must know my fate. I cannot longer rest in this suspense. Tell me now," pleaded Carlton.

Could I now clasp thee to my breast,
My heart would beat intensely thine;
Each life would feel this life's request—
Why not then, love, why not be mine?

Peace serene would ever be,
Songs in life together sing;
Throughout all eternity
Our wedding bells would ring.

"Give me a little time. I cannot answer to-night," said Clara.

"Give me hope, sweet hope," quickly responded Carlton, and I'll wait until to-morrow for your answer, darling."

"Give me a week," said Clara.

"A week!" exclaimed Carlton. "Ah, love, make it less! A week would seem an age; three days a year. So make it less, my love; an hour, if you will."

"Very well," said Clara. "The hour is growing late.

I'll lose my beauty sleep. I'll say two days, since Cupid is not fond of argument on subjects so near the heart."

"Good night, my darling," said Carlton. "Pleasant dreams be thine till I return and hear the sweetest message—'you will be mine.'"

After leaving Clara, Carlton strolled over to the Massasoit Club, a popular political organization, and drifted into conversation with a host of politicians stopping in town during election. The election was on for fair now to elect a new governor. The night was very warm. Clara had retired to her apartments, but the noise in the street below, coming up in outbursts of "Hurrah! rah! rah! for Russell!" answered by the opponents' cry, "Hurrah! hurrah for Clayton!" one hardly knew which candidate would come out victor. The counts so far came in even.

Clara could not rest, so stepped out on the balcony. To her surprise, there stood Ralston Newbanks on the curb, taking in the maneuvers of the enthusiastic political crowd. Lanterns, torches, banners and music, all swaying and moving in dense crowds toward the clubhouse, followed by men, women, and, seemingly, all the children in town from crawling size up. Hark to the roar of voices and din of music all clashing together! "Hurrah! hurrah! rah!" as the flashlight reveals the figures on the white canvas bulletin.

Ralston Newbanks looked at his watch. It was 10 o'clock. Then turning his head toward the hotel, he lifts his hat gallantly as Clara waves her white hand, beckoning him from the balcony above.

"Too much noise for you?" he remarked.

"Indeed, yes," replied Clara. "Fresh air is preferable to hot, stuffy rooms, especially a noisy night like this. Who is winning?"

"Both remain pretty even in the race," said Ralston.

"If you have nothing important on hand," said Clara, "come up here and watch the crowd."

Balconies surrounded the "Urbanno" on every side, like a belt, the entire four floors, filled with rustic benches and chairs, huge palms and flowers in every hue; at night illumined with gay-colored lanterns, appearing in the distance like a great hanging garden, from whose walks float sweet strains of music rendered by "Degarra's" band, recalling the history of Babylon's king and his Median queen, who pined for her native hills. In the day one gained a delightful view either of the city itself, or the beautiful range of mountains stretching toward the southern slope as far as the eye could see.

Ralston had been thinking of Clara while standing on the curbstone, though she believed him thoroughly engrossed watching the parade. One can imagine his delight on turning round and finding the object of his admiration not only looking directly at him, but beckoning him to her side.

It was plain to be seen Carlton Barnie and he were rivals. But it was equally as mysterious for either to discern which really had the floor. On reaching the balcony he was cordially greeted by Clara, and made to feel as though he really was the chosen one. And, rival or no rival, this was sufficient happiness for the time being to banish Carlton Barnie from his mind.

"How is it you are not at the club to-night?" said Clara.

"I was in a few moments, till yours truly came over, then I decamped," responded Ralston, looking Clara square in the face, "and consider myself fortunate in finding you alone, thanks to your good self."

"Oh, thank the election noise, weather—anything but me!" quickly spoke Clara. "Had it not been for so much noise I'm sure I'd been in dreamland."

"I am always grateful to any cause that brings me nearer to you," said Ralston, "although of late I've had to take chances seeing you."

"Oh, you and Carlton are like two overgrown schoolboys!" laughed Clara. "Why can't you stop such foolishness and be good friends, like you once were?"

"We've become too enlightened on the subject of the heart for friendship," said Ralston. "Clara," he continued, "you know you cared for me before Carlton Barnie came to our town, with all his new Australian ideas and fads. I cannot but believe yet it is only a passing fancy that time will prove a worthless, tarnished gem. And you, Clara, dear, will realize I love you truly for your self alone—have always loved you from the day I first saw you enter high school. Then we were truly happy; no little green-eyed man peering around every corner as now. I cannot believe, Clara, you have forgotten those happy days—our drives by the lake and over the mountains. The masque balls and dances we used to delight in. Why, Clara, dear, it seems only yesterday. You have not forgotten,

Clara! Tell me you remember all, and still believe I love you, for I do," said Ralston, pressing her hand to his lips. Tell me that I'm still your schoolboy sweetheart."

"No, Ral," answered Clara, calling him by his old sobriquet at school, "I have not forgotten our happy school days you speak of. But believe me, it is best not to give me too much thought or even recall those old memories. Fate has so decreed our lives to run apart. I did not plan it so, Ral, 'twas Fate."

"You then wish to forget?" quickly spoke Ralston.

"Not altogether," sighed Clara. "But you see, Ralston, we were merely children then. Now ——"

"Yes," quickly interrupted Ralston, "I see. It is different now since——. Tell me, Clara, are you engaged to Carlton Barnie?"

"Well—yes—or at least will be within another day," replied Clara, tossing her head to one side.

"And you do not think my plea worthy of consideration?" anxiously inquired Ralston. "Think well, Clara; be sure you love the man, and he returns your love. I have no desire to alter your decision now, if you consider your happiness lies with Carlton Barnie. I'll surrender if that is your final choice. But somehow I feel he is not quite good enough for you. However," continued Ralston, "your decision will settle it for ever and aye, so I'll say good night and good-bye."

"Oh, are you going?" exclaimed Clara, much surprised.

"It is best," answered Ralston. "Why should I remain longer drinking in the joy of your company,

which must eventually prove only poison to me in bitter disappointment when another has the right of way?"

"I surely have a right to choose for myself," retorted Clara, rather piqued at his leaving.

"Certainly!" answered Ralston. "Allow me to bid you good night and good-bye."

He was gone ere she recovered his sudden leave-taking.

Two days later the announcement of Miss Clara Langley's engagement to Carlton Barnie appeared in large heading in every paper: "Wealth and beauty to join hands at the altar." The wedding day was set for early autumn, as Carlton Barnie contemplated taking his bride to Australia on their honeymoon.

While preparations are going on for this elaborate wedding we'll return to Jean Nash.

CHAPTER VII.

JEAN MEETS THE MYSTERIOUS LADY FROM BOSTON.

Is all life but fiction,
  A whirligig show?
Or is it distinction,
  A question to know?
I ramble to solve it
  In a romantic degree—
It's tinker, wit and twit,
  A mixture in all we see.
I believe it by faith;
  It's a treacherous story,
What some wise men saith
  May right us to glory.

JEAN NASH was, as we have already seen, a very smart, industrious woman. With health and no encumbrance she was equal to any occasion under all circumstances. Knowing her talents were superior to her present occupation and mode of living, Jean longed for release from such bondage.

Leaving her children with her father, Jean walked twelve miles to the nearest railroad station. There were plenty of vehicles and horses and help, that would gladly have taken her to town. But she did not wish to arouse the curiosity of the family as to her plans. She preferred walking. Her feelings, too, being deeply stirred on separating from her children again, she cried the entire twelve miles. On reaching town her mind was pretty well settled on the course she intended pursuing. Making a tour of the old town, she informed her old friends and acquaintances that a lecture would be given in Congress Hall that evening. "Everybody

welcome!" About thirty people came out. Some expressed themselves as being well pleased; others considered it a pity Jean had been so unfortunate in marriage, and had to support herself and children, leaving her so little time to cultivate her talents. Others, not understanding the lecture, contended that she ought to stay home and raise her children, and not be running around the country talking about stars and crazy ideas, exploiting wing-e-dee's and the like.

It was now two years since Robert Nash saw fit to absent himself from his family. As Mrs. Millet put it, "He's hanging off in the distance, waiting the return of prosperity to his wife again," then suddenly appear. However, nothing had been heard of him in that time. Jean feared to go any distance from her children, fearing their father might kidnap them. Consulting Lawyer Noor as to the possibility of his having the right to do so, that gentleman laughed heartily.

"Why, my dear Mrs. Nash, I assure you there is little need for you to worry yourself on that subject. Robert Nash does not want the children, or he never would have left them this long. He is only too glad to get rid of the responsibility so easily. He is not such a complete idiot as not to know that you have the right to compel him to support his family. There are not many women having children but would give him a lively chase for his money. You can do it. There's a law such men must respect."

"I prefer making my own way in peace," said Jean.

"Yes, I see, Mrs. Nash, you are sensitive and prefer

the peaceable way of letting him go foot free, so long as he shows no signs of kidnapping the children. I feel sure you need have no fear of his attempting the like. But you ought to make him support his children. Did you investigate the rumor of his being in 'Jesup' with another woman?" continued lawyer Noor.

"No, I did not," replied Jean, with much dignity. "It is all I can do at present to support myself and children, let alone squander money investigating every stray rumor I hear."

"Yes, that is very true," responded Mr. Noor, feelingly. "I also heard he got in the Masonic lodge after leaving here. Though how he did so I'm at a loss to know, since our lodge here blackballed him completely."

So with this assurance Mrs. Nash went her way, demonstrating new ideas and theorizing on up-to-date subjects. In fact many of her subjects proved too deep and advanced for all to comprehend. Some, not understanding such advanced ideas, could see nothing in Mrs. Nash short of lunacy. With such discouraging features to work with, Mrs. Nash decided to leave such unprogressive people and pursue her way among a more liberal populace.

Taking her boy, a lad of six years, with her for company, Jean directed her course among a new people entirely, but found she had more than she could manage and attend to business. No one cared, even for pay, to shoulder the responsibility of looking after a boy with an exploring mind and a curious tongue

that could ply you with questions at the rate of twenty or so per minute. No, back to the woods Ralph would have to go, where the farm and surroundings appeased his curiosity.

So after Jean saw it was impossible to keep the little fellow with her, she sent him to her father's home, where the other children romped and played, unmindful of the struggle their brave little mother was making for them. After seeing little Ralph safely in the conductor's care, Jean turned, with a heavy, though brave, heart toward the hall, where already the people were gathering to hear the youthful lecturer. Men and women of varied views came to hear the "new speaker" —some out of mere curiosity, others earnest and thirsting for knowledge.

Jean was master of the situation, though, some declared, pretty young to handle such weighty subjects. As was the case in her own town, those who could not comprehend her meaning, stamped the little speaker as nothing short of crazy. But the independent, intelligent men and women, believing in the spiritual thought, could discern a strong trace of inspirational light about her, and upheld her work as "inspirational." Some, orthodox, however, went so far as to interview the Bishop, who, on learning their mission, told them, "If they did not let spiritualism and slate-writing alone he would make them write 'devils' on their slate." Others, so deeply interested, paid a phrenologist to call and examine Mrs. Nash's head, to learn whether the bumps on her head were in the right place, or if they really were swimming with wiggles in a watery

brain. When the learned phrenologist came and conversed with the lady whose cranial bumps seemed to contain too much wisdom fluid for some, the wise committee engaging his services stood in waiting. He broke the news as gently to them as possible by saying, "My dear ladies, pardon my remarks, but you had better have your own brain examined, as the lady in question appears the most sane in the crowd."

Thwarted by the phrenologist's verdict, they held another session, concluding he was too unlettered to know. And the very insinuation regarding their own brain was sufficient proof that his brain was not only watered but filled with waggle-wiggles. After the third session they wrote to Jean's people, saying she was out of her mind; they knew she was from the boogy-boo talk she was giving in Lingo Hall each night, and they, as friends, considered it a duty to relieve their soul of so grave a responsibility by informing her family. When Jean received the report from home her indignation knew no bounds. If she sat down at home depending on her poor old father to support herself and children "she was lazy." Here she had gone away, and was trying and studying each night to fit herself properly to support her family independently, and the wail goes up, "She's crazy." So Jean, seeing it was utterly impossible to please everybody, she became determined to please herself, and let scandalmongers and mischief makers drift on toward "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," for those who imagine they relieve their own soul by stigmatizing another.

Jean had by this time received invitations from many of the independent-thinking "societies" to attend their meetings and join in the good work of advancing knowledge and truth, so she decided it was better to cast her lot among an intelligent people, who not only recognized her talents as advanced thought, tending toward progress, and was willing to help her, than to drag out a living death among "lunacy" builders. Having no money for either herself or children, outside of what she earned, and from the two years of silence, it was evident Robert Nash had no intention of providing for his family, Jean was all the more determined to show she was sane enough to make her way independently among strangers, who not only preached the "golden rule," but lived it. She entered upon her task with such a light heart, carrying her troubles to no one save God. Jean showed plainly that she had been reared in a Christian family. How often had she heard her good old father read from the Book of Life, "He came to His own, and His own received Him not!" or in that great day He will say, "I was a stranger and ye took Me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed Me not; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was hungry, and ye gave Me no meat." So Jean shook the dust from off her feet as the Saviour had commanded and departed, casting, like Ruth, her lot in a strange land. She had not mingled out among the different liberal-thinking "societies" long without gaining herself a broader view of the world and life. Her experience was, indeed, varied.

Seated in her room one evening reading, a gentle

rap came to her door. Having grown somewhat accustomed to gentle "rapping" at the Spiritualist meetings, and this one, sounding so very faint, almost suggested a communication near from some invisible sphere. "Come in!" exclaimed Jean, as a second rap was heard, somewhat louder than the first.

In walked an elderly woman, neatly clad in rich black silk, carrying a small chamois bag, bowing reverently to Jean as she entered, closing the door gently behind her. She was a motherly looking woman, past seventy, of much refinement.

Ah! thought Jean, some guest stopping in for a little chat. "Have this easy chair," said Jean, drawing a great armchair near the centre table.

"Thank you," she replied, in a mild, sweet voice; then continued: "My child, I heard you speak at our meeting last night, though it was not the first time I heard your voice in famed Boston before coming here."

"Oh, my dear madam," interrupted Jean, "I fear there is a grave mistake somewhere. I was never in Boston. Surely you are mistaken."

"Yes, dear, that may all be true," replied the Boston lady. "You do not understand me yet. It was through the invisible near and far mystic 'phone of my spirit-guides that your sweet voice floated in upon my ears like silvery bells, awaking me to duty. Ah! your subject last night and your manner, my child, was sublime. Sublime! I could hear o'er the mystic 'phone—yes, almost see the spirit ascending and descending, as in Jacob's ladder dream. I know you are the one I have been sent to. I came from Boston.

Ah! that famed city, my dear, filled with mystic 'phones, spirits and banners of light, to present to you this humble offering in honor of my darling on the distant side. It's all for you, for you. He tells me so." Here the Boston lady empties the bag of shining gold upon the table. "It's all yours," she continued. "You are young, my child. When you are old enough to hear the message o'er the mystic 'phone, then you'll understand, dear."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jean, "not for anything could I take your money. Why, I never saw so much money together in my life. Are you connected with the "mint"?

"Well, my dear child," replied the lady, smiling, "that's the way our guides and spirits deal it out over the mystic 'phone in famed Boston. Beloved Boston! the city of mystic 'phones. The "guide" who directs my feet through narrow ways sent me here with this small amount. I came personally to see that you received it."

"My dear madam, I'm sure there is some mistake. We never met till now," calmly spoke Jean.

"Ah! say not the spirit's guilty of an error," interrupted the Boston lady. "Our guides, my child, are friends, and have drawn us together, as the magnet draws the needle, to advance the ideals of higher and nobler themes. I must not miss to-night's lecture. The subject is a beautiful one. I feel sure our guides will instruct you more clearly as to the use of this gold for higher investigation beyond this material sphere."

"I would not for the world offend you, madam,"

said Jean, kindly. But I really cannot, under any circumstances, accept your money."

"Yes, but the spirit speaks, my child, telling me nightly that you are the one," insisted the stranger. How, oh, how can I ever pass the 'seventh' bar and enter beyond into the sphere of the blest with this millstone around my neck? No, no! The spirit guided me all the way from Boston—beloved Boston!—to find you. No, my guides are faithful; they never err. Think, child, of inspiration!" continued the stranger. "How very small! how very insignificant my lowly offering! —fifty thousand dollars. Ah! I cringe at so small an offering for investigation beyond the celestial river. Yes, I was in deep trouble till hearing your voice last evening, then instantly my guide rapped my shoulder, saying, 'This is she, the chosen one.'"

Jean found it almost impossible to rid herself of this would-be benefactor. And as the hour was up, they walked out together and entered "Echo Hall." It was already well filled with believers and non-believers eagerly awaiting the speaker of the evening. The chairman announced the subject, and Jean walked to the front of the platform, repeating the subject, "Beyond the Seventh Sphere."

"Is there one who comprehends the narrow voyage, the few short years, the opening for a higher life, where one perpetual day and love illumines its constancy, making the transparent light a spirit of truth because it is a jewel highly refined in its own brightness, the home of the soul, where the heart is an open volume on the table of devotion? It contains all, and is the very

force of life itself, if read aright and its virtues practised. It is the highest seat of government, where all are interested in one grand estate. All are not ready to understand the meaning or receive the benefits, but there are a few who are searching after the real truth, and who know that each and every individual, to more or less extent, have this government according to their advancement into good influences that support the sphere to which they are attracted. The great light that opens up the soul to receive those high developments is a gift from God. How shall we in this imperfect life of vain glory penetrate those walls of perpetual shining, full of knowledge and order? Who will deign to listen with an ear intent, or give up the false, vain, fleeting world, for a life and eternal home beyond in the regions of the soul's foundation? Here we must expect to make changes and meet the exterior world as a life of trial. Everyone is striving to do the best they can. The earth, a large court-house, where every case comes up before the chief magistrate of duty to give an account of his or her life. All are tried; some in one way, some in another. Duty demands of each one their part. A busy world, indeed, full of everything sifting out its course. One class meets to talk business, another politics, others to make love, flatter and deceive, one to pull down what another builds up. So life goes on in the great variety, making every case interesting and full of study for the thinking mind.

"What a beautiful world! Everybody ought to be happy here during their short stay. Seek real happiness, the treasure, and pass it on that others may rejoice

and sing of the beautiful home of the soul. What a home, friends, where every thought is a flower springing from the mind to ornament that home watered by the fountains of liquid light, emanating from gardens whose walks are paved with jewels rare from mines beyond the seventh sphere, whose homes and palaces are built with hands!"

"To-morrow's lecture will be the third and last of this series," said the speaker, as she retired.

The "spirit" took possession of the strange lady from "famed" Boston. She rose to speak of the wonderful things she saw the spirit had undertaken to accomplish through this youthful subject.

"We want a 'Lyceum.' Yes, I see, coming over the mountain," she continued, "a wonderful guide for the speaker." Then sat down as suddenly as she arose.

The society, feeling all had been accomplished in this town, was preparing to change quarters and begin "proselyting" anew, in order to spread the good tidings abroad.

At the close of the meeting a tall man, advanced in years, arose, saying the spirit had taken him in charge to act as guide to the young beginner. He had heard the "call," and answered by selling his farms and lands, thus relieving his mind of material wealth, and was now ready to obey the spirit and stand up in the new.

"Well, brother," spoke up an elderly woman in the rear of the hall, whose bump of business calculation stood out prominently, "I hope you haven't relieved your pockets of all the cash receipts from that farm and land sale before coming here to stand up in the

new. I have some property along the river front you might do well to buy. The spirit told me to sell, too, and follow them."

"Me, too!" shouted a hotel-keeper. "I've got the spirit strong to sell and stand up in the new, if I can find a buyer."

"Well, if that doesn't beat all!" exclaimed the woman with the river front property, "taking a purchaser right out of my deal. Hey, there! I spoke first, young man!"

"See, here!" interrupted the chairman, "this is a meeting exclusively for 'spirits,' not an auction room for real estate bargains. Those who wish to discuss such material subjects must adjourn to meetings of that kind, or the newspaper office. Other friends imbibed with the 'spirit' and wishing to converse longer with the young speaker will adjourn to the hotel."

To the hotel they flocked; the gathering far too large for the small parlor. Then the see-saw buzz of voices therein was enough to startle the living, to say nothing of the effect produced upon the spirits supposed to be hovering near.

Two sisters and one old brother, seated in the far end of the room, were evidently seeing "something" from the way they sang "Oh, bear me away on your snowy-white wings" in such distressing discord, the clerk put his head in the door as though to make sure none were selling liquid food without a license. After walking around and convincing himself that the parlor was still holding its own minus a "bar" he made his exit. The meeting continued some fifteen minutes

longer, when all arose to the tune of "Think of the friends over there."

Franklin Cobart, the man who had sold everything to relieve his mind of all material encumbrance and stand up in the new, instantly arose, announcing that he had received a communication from his guide over the mystic 'phone, and the speaker was the young beginner entrusted to his guidance. Under his guiding wing they must sail through many "bands" and over deep waters.

Jean had become a full-fledged member of the society. And one of their principal and strongest pledges was to go wherever the spirit called. So Jean and Franklin Cobart accepted the "call" to stand up in the new, traveling far and wide, demonstrating, even illustrating scenes and inhabitants of the "spirit land."

Franklin Cobart was a gifted artist of no small reputation in his city before deciding the old things must pass away, and he must stand up in the new. Believers of the occult paid large sums for these scenes and portraits of their absent friends, which they firmly believed gazed at them from the canvas.

From childhood, too, Jean had shown wonderful talent; gifted with the "prophetic" vision attributed to the "mystic caul" found over her face at birth, on which occasion her mother lay in a "como" three days. Surely up to the present time her life was filled with circumstances so varied, through which she had to struggle. Love for her children, and knowing she had to provide for them, caused Jean, in the first place, to fly from surroundings that offered no opportunity

to either make a living or rise to higher ideals. No wonder, harassed by gossiping tongues, any reasonable proposition seemed an outlet of relief. Everything boomed with success until Franklin Cobart's worldly mind returned, and he, perhaps from remorse of conscience, began building castles in the air regarding the possibility of his "standing up in the new again," and return to his family and friends when success had crowned his efforts. Never before had he mentioned family, friends, or lands he had sold since the "call" came to him to follow the dictates of "vapory" beings.

The financial product of their labors had been increasing for some time. Jean began to take keener notice of the material side. She, too, had a family, and was ambitious to make something for them. Her ire was kindled. She would strike off independently, and work alone, thereby insure herself some footing should the "spirit" instruct Franklin Cobart to sell all and "stand up in the new again," which he did very often. As Mrs. Millet often said, "A man has his eye on a smart, money-making woman every time, and vice versa." Sometimes the seance business was prosperous, then dull. Perhaps the "spirits" were on a strike at such times, despite the faith poor, weak humanity has in the oft-told story, "All is bliss beyond the blue." Too, the fact is evident, lawmakers do not all possess the occult eye or faculty of seeing visions or grasping the authenticity of said apparitions sufficiently to incorporate and legalize the business in general. So, to keep things moving at an even pace for all, other business pursuits more generally under-

stood in common among mortals wandering up and down this vale of tears and smiles was found necessary to engage in.

The new era of extravagance and over-production in manufactured goods had not dawned. People were living in the economical era, where often clothing of the adult served double time on the children, who wore them with a "swagger" air, as though papa owned a bank and all mamma had to do was run the bills. It was from this point of view that Franklin Cobart decided to establish a first-class renovating and cleaning department in the rear of "Seance Hall." Already they had a man in view as manager without looking farther. He had been wandering in and out for three weeks in succession, asking the "spirits" to locate his vocation, which he had failed to find since "standing up in the new." When the next meeting was called he was told the "communication" had been received, and his vocation was waiting for him in the rear of "Seance Hall" outside.

Two weeks were spent in fitting up properly for business. When the opening day arrived it brought out a crowd of both city and country people, all having wardrobes at home filled with clothes needing a little "touching up" to make them as good as new. 'Twas plain to be seen an establishment of this kind was as necessary to rid old, musty storerooms and attics as the Board of Health was to rid the city of germs and microbes.

The new business prospered; but, as previously

stated, Jean was not satisfied to follow the spiritualist altogether in flitting from one occupation to another, when it only meant, as she plainly saw, the building up of a wasted estate for Franklin Cobart, who was liable, at any time, from his conversation, to receive a "call" to stand up in the new.

Jean loved her children and never complained of any task she had to perform for them. She was prospering in business sufficient to keep them with her. Ever fired with ambition, believing firmly in the old adage, "Where there's a will there's a way," and the immediate demands of children allowed no lagging behind or upholding "poverty pride." Jean believed if one thing didn't work, another would. So with this spirit she went forth, prospered and made friends. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" was as true to her now as when spoken two thousand years ago by the only perfect Man—the lowly "Nazarene."

When business was dull Franklin Cobart acted just the reverse, sitting indoors brooding over things not going right, and believing firmly it was all due to the "guides" and "spirits" getting ready to "stand him up in the new again."

Jean was out making friends and money, thereby standing herself up in the new continually. Her manner was always affable and pleasing. Everyone was glad to see Jean come in. She always talked bright, witty and pleasing subjects, thus leaving sunshine everywhere she went.

"Oh, it is easy for her to be happy!" some would ven-

ture to say. "She never had anything to trouble her. It's easy for such people to be pleasant and smile."

The old adage friend: "Smile and the world smiles with you!" and Jean heard too much of other people's troubles to have any herself. The scenes were ever before her of those who weep and weep alone, and Jean did not intend being in the alone-corner by any means after finding out the secret that happiness meant forgetting self and remembering others. Loving everything pertaining to brightness, she never lacked friends.

Franklin Cobart's ideas had become so very "freakish" regarding "standing up in the new," Jean decided it was best to sever herself from the "society" entirely. As usual, after paying all indebtedness, her pocketbook was not any too flush. But having that indomitable will and determination this never phased Jean. She was studying and working her way up the ladder gradually. Her aspirations were higher than always having to fall back on fashion-designing for a support, knowing if she persevered her talents would finally repay her efforts. Though at times she was forced to pursue this course to maintain herself and children, onward she went each day, patiently enduring, and trusting Him who doth renew the pilgrim's strength.

Stopping in a small town, her first customer was a beautiful girl of independent means anxious to learn the art of properly dressing in good style. Nothing she bought or had made was ever satisfactory. Her father died two years previous to our story, leaving his widow and only daughter independently wealthy,

Their home, an old colonial mansion, was ever alive with gay social gatherings. For, properly speaking, Mrs. Dundy was the social leader of Shelbourn. She had studied the art of how, when and who to entertain so thoroughly her word was authority on the social question. It was quite evident the daughter did not wish to succeed the mother as social leader.

"O Clarabell, why will you persist in spending your precious moments learning such drudgery? If you had no means to provide those small necessary evils I would say nothing. Your time, dear, should be devoted to society and your friends. That is your first duty. What in the world, child, will your friends think has come over you?" insisted Mrs. Dundy.

"It is my money, mamma!" retorted Clarabell.

"Yes," interrupted her mother, "and if you squander it all away, look out!"

"O mamma, don't worry about me!" insisted Clarabell. "Go on with your 'beans.' I want to be a little useful in this world as well as ornamental. And again," continued Clarabell, "you remember how shaky the market reports were last week regarding the Silver Thread Mining Company that poor papa invested in so heavily, and from which we expect such large returns. If that goes up it will be 'look out!' "

"Oh, tut, tut!" retorted her mother, impatiently. "Well, daughter, you are of age, therefore your own mistress. I'm not responsible for your actions now. It puzzles me greatly to know who could have introduced you to this poor, beggarly designer. I would not allow her in my house," proudly declared Mrs.

Dundy as she sailed from the room, giving Jean a look of bitter contempt.

"Oh, never mind mamma!" said Clarabell. "She has nothing but beaux and society in her head. Poor papa! How he would have wailed and mourned in sackcloth and ashes had mamma been taken from him! Poor, dear papa! I cannot understand mamma," continued Clarabell, "since touring through Mexico and Arizona inspecting our mines. She hasn't really been the same since meeting Newton Flint, the banker, and his party. Their acquaintance has made her 'fusty' and continually berailing me for not doing society. And, do you know, Mrs. Nash, I hate society. It seems so empty; nothing but a bubble and show. Oh, if I could only be useful in this world!"

"You will get married, Miss Dundy, and forget your opinions of to-day," said Jean.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clarabell, "I do not say that I would not marry if I met a good, true man, and loved him, and was quite sure he loved me. Yes, I would want him to be a perfect idol," laughed Clarabell, in response to Jean's assertion that perhaps she was looking for perfection.

"You have just finished school, dear child," said Jean, "and have plenty of time for that subject. Let us take up our lesson before your mother returns from her drive."

"Yes, that is so," responded Clarabell. "And, oh, do you know, Mrs. Nash, I have another dear little friend who wants to learn from you. But she will have to come over to my house and take her lessons

with me, as her mother and sisters are worse than mamma about her learning anything outside of the society act."

So Jean taught her two aristocratic pupils under some difficulties, as it generally took about two hours to teach them a half hour's lesson. Not that these girls were dull or slow in comprehending, far from it. But they had so much extra talk regarding outside matters and society—how Ethel and Helen Farnen had such beautiful shoulders and necks for decollete gowns, all from using "cocoa" butter; or how Narcisis Swan acquired such brilliant, sparkling eyes by squeezing a whole lemon in them a half hour before attending each reception.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clarabell, "if I squeezed a lemon in my eyes my friends would think I had not only come from one funeral, but lost every friend I ever had. Why," laughed Clarabell, "it would take me days to recover my eyesight!"

While these conversations at times grew very amusing, they called for more time. But as the girls became better acquainted with Jean they grew very fond of her, and were willing to pay for extra time. And Jean found it impossible to prevent their discussing personal defects, and the remedies for blotting out same.

After three weeks Clarabell Dundy and her friend Maud Wheetly considered themselves quite independent on the subject of how to design their own gowns. By this time Jean had made enough money to go on with her own studies, and was giving readings and lectures in another part of the town.

Old Professor Starr, on College Heights, a recluse and noted bookworm, filled with scientific learning, surprised his friends greatly by coming out and showing an unusual interest in Jean and her work. Through his special interest she was invited to all the college lectures, even given equal showing on the "rostrum" with other speakers.

The most exclusive homes in the city were inviting her out as their guest. Jean had struck the high key-note of her talent. Once a week her lectures were given at "College Heights Lyceum." Among her callers at the hotel was one, you and I, dear readers, have met before—Mrs. Charles Dundy. Imagine the surprise on her face when entering the reception room, to find Jean Nash, the little "beggarly" teacher of designing, whom she so indifferently ignored, surrounded by some of her own most exclusive associates in society! After finding an opportunity to talk alone with Jean, Mrs. Dundy exclaimed, not quite over her first surprise, "Why, Mrs. Nash, tell me how you came to enter a business so inferior to your talents!"

"The lack of funds to execute my ideas and the immediate needs of my children," proudly spoke Jean.

"Oh, do not tell me, a young, girlish-looking woman like you has a family to support!" remarked Mrs. Dundy. "How old are you?"

"I am twenty-one years of age, and have four handsome children," asserted Jean, quite proudly.

"Oh, you poor little child!" exclaimed Mrs. Dundy. "Why, you are younger than my Clarabell! I'm so grieved to think I misjudged you when at my home!

I presume you recall the occasion. I wish I could not."

"If I encountered any unpleasant features during my stay in Shelbourn, Mrs. Dundy, they have entirely slipped my memory. Such things are lost in the enormity of greater things I must remember," replied Jean, with dignity.

"Well, you know how it is," continued Mrs. Dundy, not altogether comfortable over a breach of etiquette toward another fellow being, "we have to be so careful, you know, Mrs. Nash—so careful to know who is who."

"Yes, I understand," replied Jean.

"Now, dear," continued Mrs. Dundy, "your talents are wonderful, wonderful! Tell me, please, where my place is on the 'mystic ladder' of time. How far am I toward the final landing? And tell me when, how and where shall I find the 'mystic key' that opens the closed door and lifts the veil of mysteries? Oh, woman of mystic learning, tell me where I am! Do not let it be below the mystic ladder, where I see, continually, man in a savage state!"

Jean saw the woman was growing too much interested to be satisfied with a short explanation regarding the thousand and one questions she asked.

"My dear Mrs. Dundy," replied Jean, after a moment's thoughtful pause, as though reflecting just what she would say to satisfy the lady's eagerness, "you do not understand, the mystic circle will have to revolve around the mystic ladder six weeks ere giving any correct information regarding your present or future state."

"Oh, my dear! So long as that?" exclaimed Mrs. Dundy, impatiently. Then, taking from her pocket a small morocco note-book, she jotted down the date that she might not lose a day over the specified time.

A surprise greeted Jean the next day while looking over her mail. It was in the form of a daintily written missive, bearing the Dundy coat of arms—an invitation to dine with her that evening; or, if Jean would send word when most convenient, Mrs. Dundy would be delighted to send her carriage. This, of course, Jean courteously declined.

As previously stated, it was Jean's intention to reach Nassau before Easter, and interview the Bishop on private business. On board the train, which was exceedingly crowded, Jean found a vacant seat beside a very refined young girl not over twenty. After traveling a short distance they entered into conversation, becoming much interested in each other. On learning Jean's object for visiting Nassau was to interview the Bishop her interest increased. Being a stanch Catholic, she wished to extend some courtesy to a stranger visiting her city, especially one having business with the good Bishop. Taking a small key from her purse, she insisted on Jean occupying her pew in the cathedral on Sunday. "This is my key," continued the young girl. "I cannot be there, but you go and feel perfectly welcome. If I do not return in time to see you on Monday at your hotel, send the key to this address," handing Jean her card, as the train pulled into Nassau. They bade each other good-bye, hoping to meet again.

It was late Saturday afternoon when Jean reached the Bishop's house.

"My dear madam, it is very hard to gain an interview on Saturday unless the business is very urgent," remarked the little French priest, who opened the door.

"The business is quite urgent, I assure you, kind sir!" replied Jean, "more especially since my stay in Nassau is limited. I leave on Monday, and cannot say when I would have the same opportunity again."

Inviting her in the large reception room, the priest disappeared to learn if an interview with the Bishop was possible. Remaining so long, Jean began to wonder if it could be that he had gone off to "meditation," forgetting her presence in that great reception room, where every sound re-echoed like in a vault. But, hark! through the corridor a soft rustling noise is heard. Nearer and nearer it comes, until, standing in the high arched doorway, is the form of a tall, stately looking man of commanding appearance, clad in the Bishop's robes. Bowing gracefully as he advances with outstretched hand to greet Jean, he inquires in a most kindly manner, "My child, you sent for me. What can I do for you?"

After recovering her first attack of nervousness and gaining confidence from the kind manner of this learned man, Jean proceeded to state her business. And as the confessional is only meant for the penitent and the eye of God as witness, we will leave Jean and the good Bishop awhile, returning to Clara Langley and Carlton Barnie.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO WEDDING BELLS.

"JUST eighteen months since I left this little town," mused a slim young man, stepping from a Pullman coach. "How much sameness exists! Little or no progress. Just the same old historic town, and likely to remain so, unless some rousing capitalist tours through this section and sees where he can double a few idle thousand. Jupiter! How stupid I am! Why, there is really something new — a watering trough directly in front of the public square. Ah! a fountain also, with 'Mercury' perched thereon. Extravagance! 'Surely the world do move!' And, if my eyes do not deceive me, there floats a new flag from the old Town Hall. Really, there has been more progress in eighteen months than in all the twenty years I lived here. I'll run over to the 'Urbanno,' the cuisine is par excellent. Seeing Billie Brownlee, the proprietor, who was very near-sighted, failed to recognize me owing to my acquisition of a Vandyke beard during my absence, we drifted into general conversation until the subject touched upon a fashionable wedding for the evening with a swell reception at the 'Urbanno.' I ventured finally to say, 'I presume the "Urbanno" carries off the laurels for all the brilliant receptions.'"

"Oh, yes, now and then we miss one!" replied Billie Brownlee.

"No doubt," continued the young man, "the Langley

and Barnie affair eclipsed all previous receptions for brilliancy."

"What!" exclaimed old Brownlee, "you evidently don't belong around here. Yes, that eclipsed everything; you are right. It's still in eclipse, and very likely to remain so. No; you're a newcomer in these parts, or you'd have known the story of 'the wedding bells that did not ring.'"

"What!" exclaimed the young man, sinking in a chair. "Do you mean to say she did not marry Carlton Barnie? Where is Miss Langley?"

"I guess, young man, you have not read the papers," said Billie Brownlee, or you'd be better posted on town topics."

"I confess the past ten minutes have quite convinced me of that fact," said the young man. I have been abroad, and even though foreign papers are plentiful, they do not specially chronicle every item unless the case be unusually sensational."

"Well," laughed the proprietor, "I think this case will be sensational enough when called up."

Really this is news, thought the young man to himself. I returned, in one sense of the word, too soon; on the other hand, just in the pink of time.

"Do you live in these parts?" inquired Billie Brownlee.

Seeing he was not recognized, Ralston—for he it was—considered it would be a good joke to conceal his identity a little longer. "Not for years," said Ralston, the plural strongly emphasized on years.

"Well," continued Billie Brownlee, "there are some

old papers back of the desk you can look over, if you care to learn more about the case."

Ralston lost no time in seeing the papers, to find out all he could regarding the "Langley-Barnie" episode. He felt he would like to inquire as to the whereabouts of Clara. The papers simply stated that she was in hiding to avoid reporters and public curiosity.

It all seemed like a dream to Ralston. He had gone away eighteen months ago to absent himself during the wedding, thinking he had given Clara and Barnie time to be far out on the high sea, sailing toward Australia, or somewhere else, he did not much care. He returned, finding everything in confusion and a big sensation on board the docket.

"Langley versus Barnie!" There was nothing satisfactory Ralston could gain from the papers. No one knew a cause. Carlton Barnie had just deliberately refused on a moment's notice, when everything was in readiness, to link his fate with Clara Langley. The question on every lip was, "Why did he suddenly turn?" But none seemed wise enough to give the answer, and Carlton Barnie would not talk, so there the matter stood.

Well, thought Ralston, Clara Langley turned me down in rather shabby style, after leading me to believe she loved and preferred me to all others. But, Jupiter! I can't blame her. What's a handsome woman to do, with scores of eligible men admiring and paying homage at her shrine? I'll just remain, since fate has brought me back in the midst of the fray, and show

fair Clara how nicely I can retaliate when the opportunity presents itself. Ah! surely the gods are good and revenge is sweet.

It was far from Clara Langley's wish to bring suit or enter into any notoriety by suing Carlton Barnie for breach of promise. Every day brought letters from prominent lawyers urging action, begging the privilege of taking up the case at once. So far none had even been successful in seeing Clara. She shirked from public notoriety. Not so with lawyers. They neither sleep night nor day. Their business is to look up trouble, and they generally find it.

Lawyer Andee presented himself at the "Urbanno" very early one morning, calling for Miss Langley, informing her of certain remarks he had heard, and, tracing them up, felt quite sure he held a clue leading to Mr. Barnie's strange action.

"Oh, tell me!" cried Clara; "do, Mr. Andee, tell me why that man should have treated me so cruelly and remain so silent! What could he possibly know? Why doesn't he act the man and explain matters to relieve me of this great embarrassment?"

"It would be wise to bring suit, Miss Langley, and find out," said Lawyer Andee.

"Yes; no doubt that is the only way," sobbed Clara. "Oh, if I only had my father or a brother to defend my cause against this wicked man, or some one to advise me what to do! How could I know, or believe him so true and honorable? My very soul cries out for revenge! But the notoriety. Oh, if I could only drop out of existence, or the earth would open and

swallow me up, that no one would ever know more of my accursed fate! Poor mother! You thought you planned wisely and well for your beloved child. But far better for me had my lot been cast in more humble walks in life than the luxury that has brought only misery, misery!"

As soon as it was learned that Miss Langley had given audience to a lawyer the reporters flocked around the "Urbanno" like bees to get a chance to report the latest news, and learn, if possible, which way the case really would finally terminate. Not being successful in gaining information regarding even which door the lawyer had made his entrance or exit, one reporter grew desperate for news, forming his own opinion and sending a lengthy article in, declaring it was to be a breach of promise. Another took up the cue, hurrying an article to his paper that Carlton Barnie had relented, and the wedding would really occur in due time.

This was not so bad for evening papers. It was left to the "Morning Mirror" to reflect the much-coveted news. The "Mirror" representative, like others, called at the hotel for news. The lawyer had gone. Miss Langley could not be seen. He was there ahead of time, therefore could not quite understand where the "Express" reporter saw a breach of promise, or the "Evening Review" man enough to predict a wedding. The "Mirror" staff grew desperate after reading so much evening news. The "Morning Mirror" must have news at whatever cost.

Looking up their young representative, Billie Dey,

as proof against failure when it came to gathering news, he was instructed to read thoroughly what the other papers had printed, sift it out, and find out the truth of which was which and who was who.

Billie could not satisfy himself that the evening papers were right, or that there was any possibility for the case terminating in that way. It seemed too tame for his imagination. If he could only get a chance to interview Miss Langley; then he might know something more definite. This way of running up and down town, interviewing everybody but the parties interested did not pay. So Billie sauntered in the "Massasoit" Club, apparently interested in nobody or anything in particular. It was a stormy night outside. Billie threw himself down in a huge chair near a window. He overheard voices in an adjoining room. Two members were interested in a game of cards. After getting comfortably fixed for a little nap and about to forget the old world, with its ups and downs, his keen ears caught the sound of Carlton Barnie's voice in close conversation with his partner in the small room.

"There's a mystery about her name," said Carlton Barnie. "It's not Langley."

"She's a charming girl," replied his companion. "I shouldn't thought you'd gave her up for that."

"Well, that's my business!" said Carlton Barnie, changing the subject.

That was all that was necessary for Billie Dey's imaginative brain and occult eyes. He could fathom two-line mysteries into columns. Next morning the

"Mirror" contained two entire columns on the front page, headed, "Barnie Finds a Skeleton in the Langley Closet."

Clara, overcome by these sensational reports, banished herself to avoid meeting anyone.

Carlton Barnie had money! This the lawyers on both sides knew, and they meant to see that the case terminated into something profitable for them as well as Miss Langley. And, properly speaking, it was the lawyers who roused her indignation to act. Their argument was, "There was no reason why Carlton Barnie should not heal Miss Langley's wounded heart with a little seventy-five thousand dollar healing balm. Barnie thought nothing of that. He was willing to give her one hundred thousand if she would drop the case without further comment. This seemed only to fire Clara more for action.

"Why should I accept his money and go through life stigmatized by his silence? No! thrice no! He will tell my counsel his reason privately, or publicly in open court. If, as he affirms, they are such strong reasons, the world might as well know the truth first as last," declared Clara. "This suspense is maddening. Yesterday I was a child, calm as a lamb; to-day I'm a woman thirsting for revenge. No; I'll not withdraw this case and remain smirched as though I was an outcast. My name shall ring from continent to continent, if need be, till the world shall proclaim it too free and pure to link with such an unprincipled character as Carlton Barnie. Oh, that I could have been more wise in reading character! I was so blind to even

presume that this man possessed a soul of honor. Ah! poor Ralston!" sighed Clara, "I did not know his worth, and treated him so badly! How true his prediction! How he warned me against this man! And I thought it only jealousy. O Ralston, I did not know your worth till now, till now!" cried Clara, as she bowed her head on the little table near her chair, sighing so deeply, the old colored mammy, a slave in Lawyer Andee's family, roused herself and exclaimed:

"O Honey, yo's nebber git cured o' dem sighin' spells if yo' don't stop sighin'! Mars Andee done told me yo' sigh all de time. And de doctor hab done send yo' up har for to forgit dem causes what done make yo' sigh. So, honey, yo' must eat, an' ax fur things yo' don' see round. I's don' want Mars Andee comin' up har an' catch yo' still sighin'. He'll fo' sure say old Milinda aint takin' good care ob yo'. Oh, my!" sighed Aunt Milinda, as she started out the door, then turned back suddenly, exclaiming, "O Lordie! there, I don' believe dem sighin' spells am catchin'!"

"Oh, no, it isn't catching, Aunt Milinda!" said Clara. "You are doing fine, and just taking splendid care of me. I feel so much better than when I first came. I'm afraid you are treating me so fine I will want to remain longer."

"Bless yo' soul, honey!" replied Aunt Milinda, "I's just lub to wait on yo' till I's die!"

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE BISHOP TOLD JEAN.

Alas! all things faded seem,
  When hope is lost in life.
Time is but one constant stream,
  A medley full of strife.
Hope on in sweet simplicity;
  Hope maketh life sublime,
Checks the heart through modesty,
  In every perfect mind.
What a blight to the human race,
  If void of virtue fine;
The golden rule, in every place,
  Develops the perfect mind.

WHEN Jean had told her story the good Bishop remained very silent and thoughtful for fully ten minutes. Every moment seemed an age to Jean. Finally, in his soft, mellow voice, full of sadness, he began giving her advice in words never to be forgotten while life lasts.

"Though the past, my child, can never be recalled, do not let it be the means of dragging you deeper in the mire, but rather as a warning signal to lift you to higher and nobler ways. Remember, my child, while it is true you have erred, this day you have come back and stand a penitent before the throne of a just and merciful God, asking forgiveness. It is for us, my child, to firmly resolve and make every effort to live in the world for some good, and by our own example of right bear our torch of Christian faith aloft for others' good. Sometimes the storm prevails, our

arm grows weak, and the light we owe to our fellow man becomes faint, because we need the strengthening power of God's Holy Spirit in our daily life. He is the true Friend and Good Shepherd, seeking the lost and wayward sheep, the Friend found near when all others seem so far; the real Samaritan, who lifts us, with all our infirmities, out of the mire, and with His tender love heals our leprous condition of mind and body. In giving you absolution, my child, I would beg of you one thing, be faithful. You have been weak and erred through an over-good heart. Study moderation; consider your companions, whether worthy or otherwise. Be more reticent. Cast not your pearls before swine. And last, but not least, my child, cling to your faith. It is the safe anchor for all struggling in this world of temptation and sin. Without faith we are like a log tossed at sea by every wave. Turn your back on the past, my child, and face Calvary. On that mountain you will find the key to hope, courage and future happiness for yourself and children. Put a high value on your immortal soul; make every effort and sacrifice rather than sell yourself for a small pottage, which cannot mean anything but shame and degradation. Pray to God for grace and strength. He is merciful, and will show mercy to the weak who seek His aid. Though storms rage and the enemy encompass thee, God will hearken and lift up the trusting heart. As your faith, so shall your strength be. My child, I give you absolution. Go, and sin no more. And may the God, whose province is in the realm

of silence, bless and keep you from all harm! God bless you! Go in peace!"

Long after the good Bishop retired Jean knelt in the little chapel, praying and meditating upon the best course to pursue in keeping with the Bishop's advice.

Here, in this little chapel, apart from all else and the world, kept sacred to God, one cannot remain long without feeling the awe-inspiring holiness of these surroundings. In no other place is this solemn quiet and sacredness apart from everything worldly felt. No loud, boisterous talking. Each member feels the hushed repose and appreciates the sacred response on entering their church, no matter how small. Silence is the countersign understood by each one while in this house of worship, dedicated to God and His glory. The smallest child is taught to know and respect this holy silence. There are halls erected for entertainments and lectures, but the church—ah! that is the sacred sanctuary, dedicated exclusively to God, the high and lofty One. Here one hies himself away from the busy cares of life and talks with God, the thoughts not distracted by the outer world; here where the light never goes out, but burns night and day before the sanctuary, where angels chant their vesper hymns of holiness unto God; where the soul forgets the mortal in the surrounding of the immortal.

Jean finally aroused herself and returned to the hotel. Next morning she arose early and attended services in the cathedral.

One can imagine the surprise on the congregation's face, seeing Jean Nash, an utter stranger, unlock and

occupy the pew of Banker John Rush. Helen Rush did not return in time to see Jean again, so she returned the key to the address given, and sped on her way, rejoicing, toward Atlanta and Savannah.

With five little mouths to feed and ten feet to shod, Jean had to keep an eye on the finance and hustle to keep figures down. It was fortunate that Jean could adapt herself to surroundings and ruling circumstances. In this way she seldom found an idle moment. She made friends, and they always knew of something good to throw in her way, because they admired her dash and persistency.

Franklin Cobart had by this time learned Jean's value in business, and did not mean to so easily give up the "golden fish." After carefully searching everywhere, he followed her to Savannah. And Jean, with the good Bishop's advice still fresh in her memory, "To do for herself and children," found herself placed in a quandary. She had to fight a fierce battle with herself right here. Franklin Cobart, pleading and declaring he never would stand up in the new again without her, she hardly knew whether this was a threat, or, merely knowing she was young, he took this way to scare her.

What must I do? cried Jean within herself. To make a scene among newly made friends will never do! Oh, what shall I do?

Jean had passed through much trouble, but it had not as yet hardened her heart. If anything, her sympathies enlarged. So, yielding, she returned to continue business with Franklin Cobart.

Stopping at her old home once more, Jean was distressed to find her old father in such poor circumstances, owing to ill health. Having no available cash herself to help her people, Jean prevailed on Franklin Cobart to remain long enough to teach her father his business, and get things started. In this way he would then be able to help himself a little.

Jean and Franklin Cobart then proceeded westward, taking with them Jean's young sister Millie, thus making one less for Clay Richmond to provide for.

CHAPTER X.

JOE RICHMOND'S ESCAPE FROM THE HOSPITAL.

JEAN'S brother had come to her in great distress and bad health, suffering from chills and fever. While lying in the hospital, seeing, each day, scores of sufferers carried out victims to this dread malady he, too, was fighting. One by one the cots were vacated. Day after day Joe tried to keep up his courage where, seemingly, no possible hope existed. His strength was waning. He began mentally constructing plans to escape, ere collapsing entirely. He had been so very patient, apparently satisfied that all was being done for him. The nurse and doctors felt perfectly safe in leaving him alone at intervals, feeling conscious his strength was fast leaving, and it being only a matter of time with him, as with other unfortunates suffering from the same scourge. Joe felt so himself; but, in his weakened state, what could he do? He tries to rise, but his arm trembles and gives way. He falls back on his pillow more exhausted than ever, crying, "O merciful God! What will I do—lay here and die like a dog? Help me, O Heavenly Father! Help me, O God, to rise out of this bed! Let me once more hear my father's voice and clasp his hand! Thou blessed me, O Heavenly Father, with good, Christian parents! But, like the prodigal son and wayward sheep, I wandered from the fold, and now am lost on the mountain, far from home, tangled in the bush of

utter despair, unable to rise, handcuffed by this accursed fever. Give me strength!" cries Joe. "Help me, O merciful God! Help me to rise and see my father's face. Help me now! help me——" And his feeble voice dies away, as he sinks, exhausted, into a sound sleep.

Two days later, about 4 a. m., down through the narrow aisle of cots, inch by inch, a man crawls on hands and knees, resting here and there beneath a vacant cot to avoid detection. At last the large glass doors, leading to the gravel roof and fire-escape, are reached. Unfastening the rope, he lets himself down, down, little by little.

"Ah!" he sighs at last, as the ground is reached. On hands and knees he crawls on, on, over the lawn. 'Tis but a step or so to the high wall; but, to one weak and exhausted, how far it seems! With only a strong determination to buoy him on, it seems miles. At last the wall is reached. The struggle has been too much for a sick man, and he sinks exhausted for a moment, then rouses himself, as the thought again springs in his active brain of the outside, the street, meaning freedom.

"It must be reached!" cries Joe, "ere I'm discovered and carried back in that ward to die. But what is this? Another obstacle to surmount! My God! I never thought—the gate is locked. The wall so high! How will I ever reach the top? O merciful God! This far, and lost! lost! lost!—No, no! I have it!" Hastily taking off his shirt and starting a tear with his teeth, he makes a rope. Throwing it "lasso" style

around one of the wall pillows projecting here and there above the wall proper, now he begins the hardest task of all—that of pulling, with the little strength left, his own weight to the top. "God help me! Here I go!" Up, up—a pause, then on and on. Ah! the top! The very sight of the glimmering lights outside renews his strength for a moment, and he drops to the ground below. He crawls some distance; falls; then tries to rise; but his strength gives out, and he becomes unconscious in a hedge along the road-side. How long he remained in this state he did not know. All he did know was, when he awoke he found himself lying in a neat little room, being cared for by an old friend—Farmer Brownson—and his good wife.

Howard Brownson had started out on his usual route to market, when, in the high grass, he discovered a man moaning, apparently struggling for breath. Alighting from his wagon, his astonishment was too great for utterance, as he bent over the prostrate form and discovered the man to be none other than Joe Richmond—the only boy, he often avowed, he'd ever had on his farm worth having. Tenderly lifting him up and placing him in the wagon, Howard Brownson turned his horse's head and drove home, instead of continuing his route to market. When Joe came to his senses tears filled the old man's eyes as he listened to the boy relate his experience.

"I had to get out, Mr. Brownson, or die like the rest. And I am sure I would have died had you not found me just when you did."

"Well, boy, yer know this is yer home as long as it pleases yer to stay," replied Howard Brownson. "Yer did not have to leave when yer did."

So Joe remained with the Brownsons three months, declaring often that he never could repay their kindness to him.

He wrote his sister regarding his experience, ill health and escape from the hospital, and the way the Brownsons had found and befriended him.

Poor Joe! This was indeed news. Completely overcome, she wired Joe, "Come to me at once! I'll help you the best I can!"

So Joe left on a visit, as the Brownsons put it.

"You mind, now, Joe, and come back when ever yer visit's out. You'll always find the latch on the outside of the door for yer at my house. All yer have to do, Joe, is to lift it and walk in," said Brownson.

"I am sure I'll never be able to half repay you and Mrs. Brownson for your great kindness to me," replied Joe, greatly moved, as he bid the old people good-bye and started on his westward journey.

While the train was yet in the station Joe looked out of the window. There stood old Howard Brownson and his wife, and their eyes filled with tears as, between tears and smiles, they waved to Joe, saying:

"We'll be looking for you any time. Good-bye! Good-bye!" And, with a last wave of the hand, the train moved on and out of sight.

It was a cold, blustering day when Joe reached his sister's home in Montana, after four days' travel. The cold, bracing air seemed to revive him. And as Jean

greeted him at the depot, he declared he felt like a new man.

Through Jean's untiring energy and good care Joe built up readily, entering in business and prospering. But while Joe made money, he was not the man to save, as long as he knew the old folk at home needed anything. Old Brownson and his good wife must be remembered at Christmas, if everything else stopped, although Joe told his sister that he could never repay them if he sent them the United States Treasury.

Joe remained west two years, but the old feeling and longing for home was too strong. He surprised the old folk by returning on New Year's Day, with enough cash to buy them a little home.

CHAPTER XI.

JEAN STANDS UP IN THE NEW.

JEAN was practically the head of the business. But the spirit of unrest was evident, more especially after Joe left, taking with him his little sister Millie. She was exerting all her energies to keep the business booming, with the constant dread that some morning she would wake up and find Franklin Cobart had received a communication during the night to stand up in the new, and in his haste might mistake the money drawer for his trunk, and forget to return. Jean began to think more seriously than ever now of the good Bishop's advice. Why hadn't she followed his worthy advice? was a question ever before her. Too much good heart, was all the answer Jean could evolve. All the trouble she had ever had came from that good heart.

Yes, thought Jean, poor mother declared years ago that it would be my ruination. The good Bishop said the same. So I've just got to change. If it's my heart eternally jumping out of the "pericardium," there's got to be some radical pruning down, and a horse-sense wall built around it up to my eyes, and topped off with spikes, if need be. Therefore, just watch me. Jean Nash, from now henceforth and forever take notice! O heart, you are condemned to serve hereafter in your own boundary only, since you do not possess judgment enough to beat off trespassers.

L OF C.

You will please attend to your own business at the pump, and not meddle with mine.

"Well," sighed Jean, "if that isn't notice enough to settle my 'good heart,' I'll have to consult the Sultan of Turkey to advise me farther."

Jean determined it was her turn to stand up in the new. And, with the rules and regulations now permanently fixed between herself and her heart, there was nothing to prevent her sailing through life with flying colors. She did not wish to arouse Franklin Cobart's suspicion as to her intentions. She left the business, money drawer and everything just as it was, taking nothing, save the little money she had by her for immediate expenses. It was very late when she reached "Chesterville." Not having much money, and children to provide for, the situation grew perplexing.

Jean rarely in anything considered the consequences until afterward. Her impulsive nature, as well as her "good heart," was forever dropping her into wrecked schemes and difficulties, from which she found it hard ofttimes to extricate herself. But Jean was born for luck. She always found someone ready to give her a lift. She was in a great dilemma. She could get along nicely herself, but what to do with her little ones was a question. She was very much tried at heart regarding the subject, when she accidentally met a motherly old woman, who stopped to admire the little golden-haired boy.

On learning Jean was a stranger and the difficulty she was having, leaving her children in boarding-

houses, she advised Jean to go straight and put those little children in a home, until she was better prepared to care for them. The horror of such a thought struck Jean, as she replied:

"Oh, how can I do such a thing! I'm willing to work and pay for their board."

"My dear child," interrupted the stranger, "you are very young yourself. What can you do for them, or yourself, in such an unsettled condition? You can pay their board in the home, and feel assured they are being cared for, and not allowed to run the streets helter-skelter while you are at business. You cannot drag them around and properly care for them."

After careful consideration, Jean saw that was the only thing she could do under the present circumstance. So, feeling none too light at heart, Jean started for the orphans' home. It was already late in the afternoon, and Jean found, after walking some distance, that it was further out than she expected. Finally her heart heaved a sigh of relief as the great wall of red brick loomed up in sight.

"Well, my poor little darlings will be able to rest, anyway, after this long tramp."

Passing through the high arched gate, bearing the inscription overhead, Jean rang the bell. The door was opened by a kindly faced matron, who, on learning Jean's mission, shook her head in the negative, saying:

"My dear, this is the foundlings' home. You want the orphans' home for the little girl, and the boys' home for the little fellow—both separate institutions across town."

Jean, being tired already from the long walk, and so overcome by this disappointment, felt as though every nerve in her body was running at large. The thought of dragging the children back seemed almost impossible.

"How could their little feet stand it?" sighed Jean, never considering whether her own strength was adequate.

Mother love! And the father—where was he? Be patient, gentle reader; we may meet him in our travels ere the story is told.

With a heavy heart Jean turned to retrace her steps over the same route toward the other institutions. It was very late when she reached the orphans' home. The matron, responding to her ring, heard her story, then, shaking her head, doubtfully, remarked in broken English:

"Me very sorry for madam! Ze Superior not home. Me not can take ze *petite fille* when ze Superior be away to ze foundlin' home."

"Oh, it's impossible," exclaimed Jean, "for me to have these little ones trudge over that ground again! When will the Superior return?"

"Oh! *Oui,* ze Superior come at 8 o'clock back, madam!" replied the little French matron.

Scarcely had she finished the sentence, when the Superior, a short, stout and crusty-looking individual, appeared. Listening with an impatient air, she required more red tape from a poor woman regarding herself and children than would take to elect a president.

Finally, she reluctantly consented to accept the little girl, being an act of charity toward the little child for the time being. "But you," she continued, sternly looking at Jean, "must provide for her as soon as possible," as she was not an orphan, and this home was, properly speaking, for orphans only, as the name implies.

Jean, her heart too full for utterance, thanked the Superior, and bade little Edna good night. But as she passed out of the great iron door into the night the sound of the door, as it closed with a heavy click, smote on Jean's heart in a manner never to be forgotten while life lasts.

It was too late to go over to the boys' home. And Jean felt she must keep one of her little ones with her for the night, or die with a broken heart. She just could not part with all in a single day. She and little Armond retired early and soon fell into a sound sleep. Next morning Jean took little Armond to the home.

With her children provided for, temporarily, Jean turned her back on everything but business, facing the future with a strong heart and brave effort to smile, even though the clouds did sometimes appear and obscure the sunshine.

By industry and thrift Jean soon placed herself where she resumed her studies. She cared for little else outside of books. It was her "hobby," if she had one at all.

The entire morning she spent out teaching. The remainder of the day was her own for study. The

class Jean did business with differed materially from those she lived among. Up with the lark, singing some catchy tune, no one suspected she had aught to think of but self.

Her youthful appearance and always bright countenance stealing in on you like a ray of sunshine made many friends for Jean. In conversation, however short, her listeners were sure to hear something worth remembering. But, beneath it all, down past the smiles and words of cheer to others, in the inner room of the heart, where the sound of the nearest friend's voice is never allowed to enter, Jean was struggling under trying circumstances, which seemed to control her life. Sometimes the shadows darkened into almost night. Appearances and rent had to be kept up; the little ones had to have first one thing then another, more or less, all the time. And Jean, mother-like, gave them first preference always.

Not a few times Jean found herself walking along the beautiful lake Sunday mornings, purse empty and but one meal a day. But think you, fair reader, this frail bunch of human energies allowed these hardships to harden her heart or make her melancholy? Far from it! Seated on a rustic bench, near where the sparkling waters splash at will, you will find Jean writing or sketching. Drawing a little nearer and—pardon curiosity, which leads us to peer over her shoulder unobserved—in a large, bold handwriting we discern—what? A complaint? Ah, no! but a song of praise and appreciation of the Maker that springs from a mind and heart that has tasted the real essence

of spiritual food. We will not be presuming too much in using the Saviour's words, when He said: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." All calm and serene as a summer breeze, recuperated by beautiful thoughts, Jean would return, sometimes finding things in harmony, sometimes otherwise. Away to her little room she would go, with a song in her heart and bright, happy thoughts in her mind.

The week previous to St. Patrick's Day was a busy one for Jean. Her spirits seemed even brighter than usual, although she worked more earnestly that week than for some time. And the reason for all this extra exertion was, she had invited a few friends to accompany her to a St. Patrick's supper, given by the ladies of St. Bridget's church. And as Jean had found many warm friends and good customers as well in that parish, she intended giving a surprise and making it a bright spot in the lives of three widows, who had befriended her when a stranger in their gates.

Little by little the bank account intended for this special occasion grew in Jean's trunk. Each day a little more was added, and Jean was happy, because her thoughts were centred on giving others pleasure.

At last the long-looked-for seventeenth arrived. A heavy snow had fallen. Jean was returning home, and stopped at the little corner store to purchase four green badges for her three friends and self. What was St. Patrick's supper going to look like minus green decoration? Flat and stale, to be sure! And one of the party, Mrs. Michel O'Flin, the life of the crowd, and the only real thoroughbred direct from

the Emerald Isle, must have a badge twice the usual size. So onward Jean tripped, happy as a lark. It was almost time for her three friends to call for her, so she did not intend wasting much time fixing and primping, and not be on time to greet her guests.

"Oh, my keys! Not in my purse, on the bureau, bed or table! Oh, where could I have laid them!" exclaimed Jean, turning round like a top. "Where can ——" Ding-ding. "Oh, the bell, and I'm not half ready. Mrs. Brown, O'Flin and Dority! Where could those keys be? I've looked everywhere. I'll just slip out and see if I dropped them coming in the door."

Out of the door Jean walked, and up the street, looking carefully, first on one side, then the other. The snow so white and clear, anything could be plainly seen. Past the corner, where a lamp-post threw out its feeble rays, Jean looked carefully. Going a few steps farther, she gave it up. 'Twas no use; she would return to her room and break the lock on the trunk rather than disappoint her friends. Again reaching the lamp-post, there, to Jean's utter astonishment, where she had looked just a moment ago, lay the bunch of keys in the very centre of the walk, where hundreds passed and repassed at that hour, returning home at close of day. Jean picked the keys up and hurried home, all out of breath, finding her three friends in waiting. Jean did not tarry long, and they all appeared at the supper in good time, all radiant and happy.

"Ah! it's happy I am to see you, Mrs. O'Flin," said Father O'Dooley, approaching the trio. "Ye are not

ashamed to wear the colors, and enough of them, of the patron saint of Ireland, I see."

"I am not, then!" quickly replied Mrs. O'Flin. "I see ye have the brogue yerself, but nary the sign of a badge. It's ashamed ye ought to be, Father O'Dooley, in this crowd without a badge."

"I am, then," replied Father O'Dooley. "But my business calls for neither scrip nor purse."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. O'Flin, "me wits should have saved ye the mortification of acknowledging the fact. Here's half of me badge to ye, Father O'Dooley," continued the lady, as she was in the act of pinning the green on his coat. Father O'Grady stepped up, remarking:

"Ah! it's here ye are, Father O'Dooley, flirting with St. Patrick's daughters! Back to the Friars' cell and pray for repentance! Ashamed ye ought to be, professing celibacy, with love in your heart!"

"Never ashamed am I," replied Father O'Dooley, "of such fine daughters of the Emerald Isle as these."

"They gave ye a badge, and disgrace will be theirs if I'm not treated the same," said Father O'Grady. Whereupon each divided their colors with Father O'Grady, who, in turn, escorted the three lassies to supper. And a merry crowd it was while the banquet lasted.

Jean was very ambitious, knowing her talents called for a larger range to develop in. She was indeed a believer in versatility, attending all denominations in order to learn their views and broaden her own. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Spiritualist—in fact,

every place where knowledge was expounded on various subjects—Jean could be found.

At the Spiritualist meetings advanced thinkers and men of great learning wrestled with the material and the spiritual theory. The Methodist talked "Wesley;" the Presbyterian, "Calvinism;" the Universalist, God and man in one—no creed, no hell; Catholics, the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified; the Jews, the old Mosaic law and the coming of the Emanuel, each theory containing food for a speculative mind such as Jean's.

She had to exert every effort to support herself and children. Never hearing from Robert Nash, she supposed him dead, not allowing herself for a moment to think he could be living and act so heartless toward his children.

Every spare moment Jean devoted to study. Where others sought social gaieties, spending hours on dress and personal adornment, Jean sought knowledge. Thus, when accidentally thrown in social circles, she was the brilliant star, outshining diamonds and gaudy apparel, because she cultivated the garden of her mind, filling it with carefully selected seeds of learning, which continually blossomed forth into new ideas and thought, long remembered after fashion, fads and fancies had grown to weeds. Jean had come up so far under trying circumstances; she had studied hard to bring out her talents, that she might enjoy larger returns for her labor, as her children, now growing up, would need so much.

"If I only had a million to give each one!" sighed Jean.

What manner of heart can some men have, never to care for their own children, though they care nothing for the wife and mother? Differences arise between men and women in the marital state, causing a coolness to spring up, which drifts into indifference, and very often separation. The love that surmounted all difficulties is absent. One can partially understand and make allowances here accordingly, as the subject is too varied to be argued from one standpoint alone. But what difference could possibly cause a man to forget the purest love, that of his own innocent little children? There is an absence of pure and holy love in his heart.

It would seem rational to believe children born to parents who are continually wrangling, quarreling and despising the very presence of the other, could not claim the same affectionate influence as a child born under opposite circumstances, where the father and mother love and are truly devoted to each other and their home. The former simply two blighted, mismatched lives on passion's fickle sea, and the offspring often left to sink or swim to shore as best they can.

All who knew Jean admired the plucky little woman, and never failed to patronize her undertakings, although they were never sure what her next adventure would be. But it mattered not. She was industrious, and trying to care for herself and children single-handed, and they considered such efforts worthy of support. She had finished a course in music,

law and medicine, but had not decided which particular one she would follow permanently.

Old Johnson Merryweather's widow had the name of being too stingy to live. Suffering so badly with rheumatism, she was obliged to walk with two canes. She had watched Jean with keen interest since the first day she entered the house as a boarder. She finally summoned up courage, and invited Jean down in her rooms, something unusual, and which started all the boarders' tongues a-wagging.

"Well, Mrs. Merryweather, how are you?" inquired Jean, walking in one evening.

"I'm not bragging to-day, Mrs. Nash. My old 'rumatis' has the best of me again," replied the old lady, shaking her head.

"Oh, you are too young, Mrs. Merryweather, to be nursing rheumatism! Let me look at your feet," said Jean. "It may be the gout. Ah, I see! You need an operation!"

"An operation!" gasped Mrs. Merryweather. "Oh, I'll surely die!"

"Oh, no!" replied Jean, who noticed the old woman's toe nails had grown so long they turned and lapped into the flesh, and was growing there. "I'll fix your rheumatism in a 'jiffy.'"

After cutting off the overlapping surplus, old Mrs. Merryweather gained such relief she jumped almost out of the chair, exclaiming:

"I heard you could do things; but it beats all where that 'rumatis' has gone. The crutch and cane factory will have to go out of business if you stay here."

It soon spread over the town how Mrs. Merryweather had been cured.

Jean was doing nicely now in law. She preferred that profession. What to do with her children was the next most important subject to consider. Seated in her office one afternoon the door opened and a man of medium height stepped in. He was well dressed, of commanding appearance.

"I wish to consult Lawyer Nash. Is she in?" he inquired, rather nervously.

"I am Lawyer Nash," replied Jean. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"My name is Rand—Winston Rand," quickly spoke the stranger. "I came in response to your advertisement, and wish to enter partnership business with you."

"My advertisement!" interrupted Jean, in utter astonishment.

"Yes; I see you do not understand," replied the man. "But you are anxious to do better than you are doing in business. And as I received the communication over the 'mystic 'phone,' I answered it in person, knowing we can make banks of money. You are one of the lecturers at our hall, and I want you to go in business with me. I'm a magnetic healer, and since you've gone through college we can make money—stacks of money."

"Why, sir," answered Jean, "you are a stranger to me!"

"Yes," interrupted the man, "and you are a stranger to me. But I know we can make money—barrels of money. And money is the vital topic—it talks. It's

a language understood by every nation, whether of gold or silver standard."

"I'm doing very well now as I am," replied Jean.

"Yes; but don't you want to do better?" interrupted the stranger, his eyes fairly snapping with business possibilities. "I'll leave you to think it over by this evening. I'll call at 7 o'clock for your answer." And out he darted as suddenly as he appeared.

Well, another Spiritualist the spirit has moved, thought Jean. I wonder when my experience will ever end with them. Since joining the "Near and Far Society" it has been one continual routine of surprises. But if the spirit says go, I'll have to go, being a good standing member. I'll just run over and talk with Father Mockinbird and hear what he advises.

Poor Jean! Always anxious for someone to advise her, but she seldom heeded their advice. First Methodist, then Catholic, Baptist, and from the general outlook at present, liable to jump over the fence into Spiritualism.

"Oh, dear!" cried Jean. "If I could only settle down on one of the many theories expounded nowadays. This might be the chance of my life to make money. But my children! Still, what did their father, Bob Nash, care? They might have starved in the gutter. What need I care?" Then rousing herself, instantly exclaimed, "Ah! God forgive the thought! I did not mean it! The little darlings! They shall not starve either in the gutter, street or house, while I have strength to work for them. I'll go up and see the good Bishop again."

On her return, she found the magnetic healer waiting, and as both talked business to the point within two hours everything was settled. Winston Rand jumped up suddenly, this being his style.

"Now, I'll go over and get the tickets, and have an express here for your trunk in one hour; so be ready."

Imagine someone sending an express without having to order one yourself, thought Jean. Within half the time it takes to tell the magnetic healer rushed back to Mrs. Nash, accompanied by a little girl, dirty, ragged, hair all frowsy and uncombed.

"O madam, see the trouble I have! I hardly know how to tell you. I gave my wife, with her separation papers, money to go to Europe, and here she has just returned to-day with nothing, and thrown the little girl back on me in this style. *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* What shall I do?" cried the man, in utter despair. "Saturday night, and nothing for the child to wear. I do not know where to leave her; our tickets are purchased; I cannot leave her just anywhere. Oh, what shall I do?" continued Rand, walking up and down the floor, the little girl hanging on his coat, as though afraid to release her hold.

"She is your child. Take her with you," quickly interrupted Jean. "We have no time to lose; the trunks have gone. Here, throw this small cape around her."

In less than fifteen minutes all three were aboard the train, just reaching the station in time.

On arriving at their destination, Jean took the little girl in her room, bathed and spent the better part

of the night getting her mass of black curls out of the tangle and free from vermin.

It was the over-anxiety to make money for her own little children that caused Jean to have this extra trouble. What will the child wear? was her query.

Looking at the poor little forlorn being, she could not squelch her "good heart" here. She, too, had children. And though the "wall" was built around her heart as high as the heavens, it would even then not be high enough to keep her heart from responding to a little child. Looking over her own trunk and belongings, finally a beam of satisfaction played over her countenance as she picked out a little summer silk.

"Yes; this will answer the purpose. I can very conveniently discard it for this unfortunate little child."

All night Jean sat up, making a little dress, that this little child, a comparative stranger to her, might, too, go out on Sunday, and not remain imprisoned for want of a dress.

As usual "good-hearted" Jean, at the sight of this little child, her heart leaped out of the pericardium and bounded clear over the ironclad horse-sense "wall" she mentally constructed. She never questioned the labor. It was sufficient to feel another was being benefited.

Imagine the surprise on Winston Rand's face as he entered the dining room next morning for breakfast to see Jean and his little girl—not the ragged, forlorn little creature of a few hours back, but a pretty child,

dressed as stylish and becoming as though she possessed an elaborate wardrobe.

"Ah, madam! How very kind of you! I can never express my gratitude," said Winston Rand. "You have not slept any, I am quite sure, doing for my child. How can I ever repay you?"

"The child needed attention," was all that Jean replied.

Luck followed from the start. The hotel parlors were crowded every day with an eager, anxious throng.

Jean noticed every new town they entered Winston Rand had some excuse regarding the baggage, and she was invariably called upon to register.

The next time Jean hung back, giving Winston Rand a chance to register. But not much! He played the baggage excuse so fine Jean was again invited to register before going to her apartments.

"Why is it," she began, as Winston Rand entered the reception room, after being absent an hour, "that you do not go to the office first and register when we enter a new hotel? You are surely not afraid someone will imitate your writing and forge your name!"

"Oh, no; not at all!" laughed Rand. "I could just as well. But I would rather you do that, while I look after our baggage."

"Very well, since I understand," said Jean.

"Millionaire" Slocum, as Josh Slocum was called by everyone who knew him, and even those who had only heard of him, for his peculiarities made him known to all, attended the entire course of lectures

given in Arcadia Hall. Of the five, the following one opened the door of his heart and purse to welcome the lecturers in his private home, where he invited a number of his friends to hear his favorite lecture repeated: "Aspirations from the home of the soul."

"With all the faults that flesh is heir to, man is a noble being, worthy of every blessing which he endeavors by higher aspirations to receive. It is that aspiration from the divine that the mind feels so much in these uncultivated plains, making an effort to describe according to their knowledge as they have advanced.

" 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' Man is a part of God, emanating from Him, which makes Him interesting to know and study all through the different stages in this promiscuous life. By searching out every definite and indefinite course to make the heart worthy of the soul's home in eternity. Are there many in this age of refinement and civilization that realize the full value of the soul's principles? With the greatest tenacity they cling to old superstitions and follies.

"The tree is known by its fruits. When we think over nature's laws, how many beautiful blessings there are to enjoy! Is it not time to study these profound truths? What are the reasoning faculties for, if not to improve by self-culture, to make each a worker in the great vineyard of eternity? All must prepare their mental, moral and physical conditions while on this sphere of action. They cannot unless strength and power is revealed understandingly to the soul. Hearts that are cold, standing aloof, indifferent as

to their own welfare, thinking every fellow-being stands in their way of progress and prosperity. By this supposition they fail to take courage and pursue nature's law and science independently, fail to comprehend and establish the true theory, because they know not how to appreciate the tides of unbounded space. Life currents are our guide; the understanding is the helm; the Godhead is the life-saving boat, bringing souls safe to shore.

"Hither and thither through the broad expanse each soul a star, gathering weak shells from the great ocean of life. taking one out of many from the different walks, placing them in a world somewhere to become stars of light, to advance truth and knowledge of this most valuable home.

"A little flower somewhere extends its roots all around to be nourished by another, to give elasticity, strength and vigor. The virtue of manhood gathers out of the number those to strengthen them that are moved with energy, enterprise and learning. The sun must perform his duty in turn, as man performs his work. The office of the sun is as dependent as man. All are attractive powers void of self-existence. The sun could not shine without his fuel, therefore the sun is a dependent body, fed by the planets. Even this little earth of ours, all its waste element, or what we would call its wasted material, is doing its perfect work. Gases being constantly thrown out of this system, furnishes, with the waste from all the different planets, that which sustains the sun. Do I expect a home in the sun? Indeed not! Do I expect a

home after this life in the planets? As ridiculous as the first assertion. Neither is my home in the Milky Way, because my soul is not complete. After I reach the golden gate of order, the saints unloose every fetter. I am then nearer my home in the soul. The saints are fulfilling their orders, therefore not in their permanent place of resting. Knitting and netting they are weaving the lot in spheres that are living, forgetting and forgot.

"Rouse from the sleeping night and look to the land where everything is bright. Make the acquaintance of the little star Constancy. It will unfold to you problem after problem that will bring to you satisfaction and comfort to know that your abode is in the beautiful land of the soul."

Old Josh Slocum went home, scratching his head and thinking deeper than he ever thought before.

"Old woman!" he exclaimed, as he entered his home, and Mrs. Slocum knew there was something unusual on his mind, as this was his manner of speaking when puzzled. "I have been a standing member of the big church most all my life; I have heard men of learning—in the church and out—on various subjects, but I have heard more this morning out of the mouth of a woman concerning that place you go after you are dead than all the science and theories put together. They are doing big things down in the 'Arcadia' Hall. I am going to have them come up and straighten the nerve centres of my family. Your nerves are all twisted. Katie's need a hauling over.

And there are times I feel as though my liver or something had flew clear through the top of my head."

So old Josh Slocum engaged the two healers at a thousand dollars per month, to start the nerves right again in his family.

Josh Slocum was as generous as he was rich. Old-fashioned in his manner and dress, style never bothered him. He left that for the women folk, often remarking, "No wonder their nerves were unstrung, with all the furbelows they had to wear and keep track of."

He could be seen most any day starting out with a wagon loaded with provisions, coal and clothing for the poor. Anybody needy received them. No questions asked.

Josh Slocum never waited for Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's—any time was good enough for him to relieve a neighbor, and seemingly everybody was his neighbor. Still this man of generous heart and purse was in danger of his life each time he stepped from his own door. Being a divorced man, he had married a divorced woman, about which we will hear more later.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. SLOCUM AS A MATCH-MAKER.

Time is but a hurried master,
  Fleeting breath in old decay.
Not all hearts are sticking plasters;
  Each love must select its way.
Now you mingle in the lobby,
  But with time you cannot stay.
Love is everybody's hobby;
  Every love will find its way.

WINSTON RAND saw he could not devote proper time and care on his little girl while traveling, so he placed her in a convent under the care of the good Sisters of Mercy.

Jean and he, both now unhampered, traveled extensively, making money. Prosperity favored them on every turn. Winston Rand was a natural born financier. Twenty-five or fifty dollars in his hand soon doubled itself through his shrewd manipulation. If he bought a horse to-day for seventy-five dollars, he found a buyer next day willing to pay one hundred and fifty dollars for the same horse. Everything doubled in value under his management.

Josh Slocum's second wife had a host of poor relations, who followed in her trail. Among them a widowed sister, having one child. She was very poor, both in purse and health, so made her home with the Slocums. Though poor, Katheryn Dangraw was handsome, stylish and a good entertainer, which pleased Mrs. Slocum very much. She depended

entirely on Kitty doing the honors of the house socially. For she (Mrs. Slocum) had eloped from school when a mere slip of a girl in her first matrimonial venture, not only cheating herself out of an education, but compelled to live poor until getting a divorce and marrying Millionaire Josh Slocum. On the other hand, Kitty had finished school and married a society man, whose sole ambition and happiness was to keep his wife in the gay whirl of society. This lasted only a few short years, when suddenly the crash came, as in a night, of the wrecked iron-clad bank, sweeping fortunes away like chaff.

Kent Dangraw could not survive the shock, and within a fortnight died a raving maniac. So it need not be wondered at, when going to the Slocum mansion, you first encountered the clever young widow. Winston Rand was a very handsome man, of fine address. Mrs. Slocum, though not a good entertainer, proved apt in weaving plans. She liked Winston Rand from the first time she met him; and while not being over-anxious to give up her sister, was, at the same time, on the alert for any sign of a good match loitering around. After carefully studying Winston Rand at a distance, she discovered his excellent financial qualities, therefore, conceived an idea that it would be a fine thing for he and "Kitty" to make a match. Wise young woman that she was, she set to work planning the match.

Winston Rand loved money more than anything else. He had battled for it on some pretty rough fields, and knew its value.

"Your dollar's your friend," was one of his favorite expressions, when overhearing a discussion on friendship. We need not wonder, then, on finding him often spending double time at Slocum Heights.

A thousand dollars per month was an important item. And Mrs. Slocum and Kitty looked upon these prolonged visits as deep infatuation for the attractive Kitty, who sang and played to him such sweet love "ditties."

"And Kitty, dear, he sighs continually, too deeply moved for speech," said Mrs. Slocum. "You have started right, dear."

"I believe I have," sighed Kitty. I have moved his heart to feel the real pathos of my voice as it floats out in strains of sweet melody."

I am not sad, love, dear,
When thou art near,
When—thou—art—near.

As the last note died away, Winston Rand snapped his fingers nervously, as he rose to speak, causing Kitty to turn suddenly around, facing him, and remarking:

"I am afraid you are not fond of sentimental music, Mr. Rand. What is your favorite style of music?"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Dangraw, I am charmed with your music and beautiful voice, my only regret being —ah! hem! I always have to—ah! remember the busy side of life, and break away from—ah! ahem! your charming presence. Having an important engagement now, I most truly regret having to leave

you so soon, thanking you for the past moments of pleasure, and trust I may be privileged to enjoy another musical evening ere long. Oh, yes! Ah, hem! Will be delighted to dine," continued Winston Rand, as he bade the widow good afternoon.

"Will you call to-morrow? No! Well, good-bye!" sweetly replied the widow, as he descended the long white marble steps.

At first both Jean and Winston Rand were invited guests at Slocum Heights. Quite frequently old Josh Slocum invited all his friends to hear Mrs. Nash talk on "Aspirations from the Home of the Soul." Then Mrs. Dangraw, who flattered herself as being the brilliant social light at Slocum Heights, did not relish becoming a lesser light every time Jean appeared.

The little "green-eyed" monster could see nothing but Winston Rand seated in an easy chair, gazing intently at Jean during her discourse; not as a polite listener, but with a more languid, admiring gaze, that, to a keen widow's observation, speaks volumes. A more admiring gaze, thought Kitty, than I ever discerned on his countenance while singing my best. I will tell Nell of my discovery as soon as the guests leave."

So that evening Kitty and Mrs. Slocum compared notes.

"Kitty, dear," said Mrs. Slocum, "Winston is all right. He loves you, I know. He may feel shy, dear, owing to our great wealth."

"Wealth, nothing!" interrupted Kitty. "Nell, if you ever expect me to captivate that man, for my

sake don't be continually asking his business partner here every time we have company. She talks too much. Nobody can get a word in edgeway for her."

"Why, Kitty!" exclaimed Mrs. Slocum, "everybody enjoys hearing Mrs. Nash talk. She is so brilliant in company, sister dear! And I am sure you were completely wrapped up in her yourself."

"Yes; but we can't kill two birds with one stone in this case. If you expect Winston Rand to like me, don't be asking them both here together," remarked Kitty, knowingly.

"Oh, tut, tut, Kitty, dear! Don't you get jealous. You will win Winston Rand yet, without any such precautions," laughed Mrs. Slocum, as she tripped lightly out of the room.

Winston Rand was now a frequent guest at Slocum Heights. Jean was invited, too, in a manner, but politely declined, owing to business. Perhaps, too, her keen, intuitive eyes had peered into the little widow's heart, and learned some few points worth remembering for future use.

Winston Rand was perfectly satisfied as long as Jean accompanied him to Slocum Heights, but when she declined the invitations, Winston seemed very much averse to going himself, and would constantly remind Jean that he preferred remaining with her. Whereupon Jean would insist that it was business and his duty to go.

Kitty was always happy when Winston called, be it morning, afternoon or evening. It had been rumored around that Mrs. Slocum, in order to win

the millionaire from his first legal wife, consulted every medium and fortune-teller in the craft. It mattered not how far distant they were. When all local signs had apparently failed and she was doomed to live out life as a poor man's wife, since all the charms had failed to sever the tie quietly, and Josh Slocum's ungainly-looking wife seemed determined on outliving everybody, though for what no one with half sight could tell, as it was plain to be seen Josh Slocum was good and tired of her long ago.

When all seemed lost, in some way or other Nell Boggs got news of a wonderfully gifted "seer" on the Pacific Coast—the seventh son, born with the veil, and had studied Egyptian mysteries so deep that every breath he drew was a secret wafting charm about his sacred den, which consisted of a cave far in the mountain retreat, away from the sound of the living world.

Here he brewed magic teas and mystic powders that defied failure in any pet hobby or scheme. To send was out of the question. One must visit the magic mystic cave, and meet the claimant of deep, unfathomable mysteries face to face, and become acclimated and completely enveloped in the mystic atmosphere of two thousand years ago to properly embrace the truths and become possessor of the valuable magic mystic ideas and mixtures necessary to execute hobbies ere they grow stale and unprofitable.

Josh Slocum listened intently while Mrs. Boggs recited the wonderful news. He was willing to furnish the money for all expenses if the scheme would only work.

But another thing about this mystic fellow ——

"Prophet, Josh," corrected Mrs. Boggs.

"Well, mystic prophet!" repeated Josh Slocum, "or whatever he might be; he uses the word embrace pretty often. I do hate you going alone," sheepishly continued Josh.

"Now, just hear the foolish man talk!" interrupted Mrs. Boggs, hastily. "Are you going to let every good chance slip by, Josh Slocum? We're engaged! Ain't I wearing the engagement ring you gave me? And have you not called me your mystic soul?"

"You stop talking that way, Nell Boggs!" quickly interrupted Josh Slocum, "or you will have me a bigamist before I know. Here, take this roll of money, and be off as soon as you can to see that Pacific mystic, and mind you hurry back. Don't linger so long in the mystic atmospheric embraces of two thousand years back, that you will become so acclimated you will not be able to live in this climate again. You ought to be back in two weeks. Mystic, magic embraces!" muttered Josh Slocum, as he rose to leave, "that sounds like dangerous walking."

"And getting rid of one half of oneself sounds dangerous, too," responded Mrs. Boggs. "We are both out on the same ticket, if we ever get these snarly, knotty matrimonial ropes untied."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Slocum, "that's it. They beat the sailor knots. Now, if Josh Slocum and Nell Boggs' knot ever gets tied half so well I will not complain!" chuckled the old fellow, giving Mrs. Boggs a sly glance.

"Now, never mind that, Slocum," replied Mrs. Boggs. "When I return we will have a regular untieing and tieing up."

"Well," simpered Josh, "you be sure you sit up and notice things, and get all the mystic magic (minus embraces) coming to us, so as to prevent another tangled knot."

Across the continent hastened Mrs. Boggs, leaving her family and friends under the impression that she had been called west to visit a sick relative.

Three weeks elapsed, and Mrs. Boggs returned. Everybody commented on how serious and silent she seemed. Her family argued this was a becoming mood, just leaving a sick relative, and it aroused no further comment. Finally the opportunity came for her to see Josh Slocum. He called to collect his rent.

"Well, how did you make out?" he inquired.

Carefully taking from her pocket a tiny Egyptian decorated box, containing powder enough to fill a thimble. "See, Josh! I paid dear for this box," said Mrs. Boggs. "But he said it will do the business, if used rightly. It cost one thousand dollars."

"What!" exclaimed Josh Slocum, losing his balance and falling off the chair. "One—thousand—dollars —for that stuff! Great Scott! Woman, you will ruin me!"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Mrs. Boggs, as calm as though she had paid only ten cents. "Mystic magic comes high, and——

"Well, I'm blamed if you have to buy much of that,"

interrupted Josh Slocum, "it will end in "Blastic tragic!"

"You don't seem to understand, dear; it is full of magic," replied Mrs. Boggs.

"Well, it ought to be full of something at that price," replied Josh. "Durn my hide if women and magic mystic don't come higher than gunpowder. Why, I could buy enough powder to blow up a town for five dollars!"

"O Josh, dear, consider my feelings, and have some sense," said Mrs. Boggs.

"Sense!" exclaimed Josh. "Yes, that is right. If I don't watch my cents I will not have many dollars."

"O Josh! and I thought you loved me!" cried Mrs. Boggs.

"I ain't denied a-loving you," said Josh, looking cautiously around. "But to my reckoning, there is not enough powder in that box to settle one, let alone two knots."

"Yes, but Josh, dear, it is full of magic," declared Mrs. Boggs. "I saw him fill the box with my own two eyes."

"What! Can you see it? What does it look like?" interrupted Josh, becoming much interested.

"Why, dear, it is invisible to the naked eye, you know——

"No; I don't know anything about it, only I am two or three thousand dollars out. That is the most invisible part noticeable to me. How in creation, Nell Boggs, could you see a thing with your two eyes

if it was invisible?" inquired Josh Slocum, much puzzled.

"Oh, dear!" replied Mrs. Boggs, "I had the spell on my eyes, and could see more mystic magic going in that powder than I ever dreamed of seeing."

"I see!" remarked Josh Slocum. "He didn't pull the wool, but the spell over your eyes. Well, it will have to perform some wonders around here to convince me of its face value. Magic mystic!" repeated Josh. "One thousand dollars a thimbleful! I would like to take out a few shares in that company. What kind of a looking fellow did you say he was?"

"Oh!" interrupted Mrs. Boggs, "just like all prophets—mystic looking. Now, this powder! Let me see! Oh, dear, I have to read the directions every time! I ought to know it by heart. Now, listen, Josh, what has to be done to insure success."

"I am all attention," declared Josh Slocum. "If there is any value in that powder I want to see it."

"Well, listen, then," repeated Mrs. Boggs, "and I will read the directions: 'Take the powder, divide into equal parts, mix one cat's tail, three dog ears and one rabbit's paw; wrap it in a neat little package, tie together with hair from the head of the one you intend trying the charm on; put inside lining of coat near the heart; drop ten drops of mystic magic tea in the ear of the same party three nights in succession while sleeping. After the third night everything is easy sailing. The right couples procure license and get the knot tied by a dominie with two blue eyes, one Roman nose and a cupid-bowed

mouth. These are the mystic features indispensable to securely retie divorced knots of this character. Then proceed to walk cautiously out sideways, looking backward into the past to avoid future mistakes, using great care not to stumble over door mats or rugs, which cannot mean anything short of mortification and discord——

"Here! Stop right there! One thousand dollars and all that program!" interrupted Josh Slocum. "Why, it is worse than going to Mardi Gras and finding every room taken. Well, as for the hair," he continued, "I can find hair enough in the bureau drawer to tie up a trunk, if need be. But what does puzzle me is the three drops in the ear."

"Oh, you cannot use false hair!" exclaimed Mrs. Boggs; "it has got to be the real natural hair off the head of the enemy, or spoil the charm. Oh, dear, you will make a failure yet!"

"Well," said Josh Slocum, emphatically, "I will see to it that the one thousand dollars' worth of mystic magic ain't lost, if I have to cut the whole head off. That is where a man is always in a quandary when it comes to working magic mystic tricks. Women can coddle around a man and get all the hair off his head to tie parcels or anything else, and pour a whole bottle of soft soap in his ear to gain a point, and he is just fool enough to believe it is all gospel truth, and that he is the real 'peri-endocardium' all combined. Now, if I go a-fooling around that woman of mine, cropping locks of hair off her head and pouring mystic magic drops in her ear, she is just as likely as not to jump

three feet, strike the ceiling and say I have not only been drinking and trying to pull her hair out by the roots, but administering dope drops in her ear."

"Now, Josh Slocum, you are the scariest man I most ever saw!" exclaimed Mrs. Boggs. "After all my traveling and your talk of loving me, your mystic soul, I declair it is just like a man."

"Oh, no, no!" interrupted Josh Slocum. "I am going to get that hair off her head and them drops in her ear if it takes me ten hours."

From all accounts the charm was, from Mrs. Boggs' standpoint, a complete success since she and Slocum were last seen planning an extensive tour, apparently in high glee.

"Mrs. Slocum No. 1 was well pleased to rid herself of a man, who not only talked in his sleep about women and wing-e-dee mystics, but who actually tried to ruin her hearing by dropping ground glass or the like in her ears. So the judge decided her plea of uncomfortability was sufficient grounds for any woman to have a divorce on.

Mrs. Boggs also found a plea for her knot to be untied, although poor old Joe Boggs, an unlettered man, will never quite understand how it all came about; how his wife could get a divorce so easily, right under his nose and marry Landlord Slocum.

"I will move right out of his house. He will never git another cent from me," declared Joe Boggs.

But to a millionaire, what was that? A small item to borrow trouble on.

Can it be wondered at, then, Kitty Dangraw having

explicit confidence in her sister's aptness to work schemes. She and Mrs. Slocum decided it was necessary for their health to take a little vacation. They hurried across the continent, making a four weeks' stay.

While Mrs. Slocum had ideas in her head for Kitty, she also had a few on her own account. She had captured the Millionaire Slocum. Her next wish was for an heir, and just the kind she wanted. She would consult the wise Pacific Coast "seer" on the matter. She knew he could waft his mystic eyes about, causing her child to be just what she most desired—a Lord Byron, not a Tennyson, Longfellow, or Shakespeare —ah, no! None of these for her! Nothing but a Lord Byron could fill her heart with joy, or prove a suitable heir for Slocum Heights.

On their return Mrs. Slocum gave a reception in honor of Josh Slocum's birthday. Winston Rand was among the invited guests.

Josh Slocum contended that Mrs. Nash ought, by all means, to be invited. But the women folks' opinion, as usual, prevailed, and she was not there.

Mrs. Dangraw greeted Winston Rand as he entered the drawing room. Truly she had never looked more charming than now, he thought—all radiant and smiling. A perfect picture, in the most exquisite Paris gown he was quite sure he had ever seen. At the close of the first dance he led her to a seat in the large bay window, opening out on a small balcony, and almost entirely hid from view by huge palms on either side.

"You look very pale, Mr. Rand. I trust you are not ill?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Dangraw. "Is there too much draught from the window?"

"I am very well, thank you, my dear Mrs. Dangraw. The drawing-room was a little warm, hence my desire to come here," answered Winston Rand. "We had a busy day. No doubt that accounts for my non-bright appearance. I am delighted to find you looking so well and charming after your western trip."

Of course this was a case of one thousand dollars; something must be said.

"I am afraid you are working too hard in your business," continued Mrs. Dangraw, laying her hand on Winston's forehead. "Really, Mr. Rand," she exclaimed, "your head is very warm. I will bathe it with ammonia mystic water. It is very cooling and refreshing. You will have to acqnire the habit of using it to relieve your headaches."

"I am afraid," interrupted Winston, "you are starting the habit on me. I am very apt to imagine the bay window and a charming widow most essential to effect a cure."

"Ah, Mr. Rand, you wish to flatter me!" simpered the widow, as she poured another overdose of ammonia mystic on his head, which ran down his face, literally deluging his collar and shirt bosom. Still the widow, so preoccupied with the compliment, kept on pouring the mystic ammonia and rubbing his head, unmindful of the damages. And Winston Rand, unwilling, perhaps, to cause the widow any embarrassment, said

nothing, nor offered any resistance, while she bathed his brow, until, like a tired child, he fell asleep.

"At last!" sighed Kitty Dangraw. "Now, for a lock of his hair, and ten drops in his ear! Nell says it has to be repeated three different nights in succession. But when will I ever get another chance like this? I can't see that it ought to make any great difference, so I will just drop thirty drops in his ear now. I hope he won't wake up. Oh, dear! I have so much to do. I am afraid I will forget half. I wonder if I will get through tying up that powder and sew it up in the coat lining. Oh, my! This is truly nerve-wrecking. How I dislike having to hurry through things! I do wish Nell was here! She is so self-confident! I feel so shaky—just like a thief," continued the widow, as she started to fish for the inside coat seam near the heart. Oh, my! I would die outright if he ever opened his eyes!"

After a moment, which seemed an hour, the little seam was ripped, the parcel inserted, and the seam again sewed.

"Dear, dear!" sighed the widow again and again. "I feel just like nervous prostration. I wonder if Nell was affected likewise. Never again will I risk doing charm acts alone. Why, that was worse than actually courting a man, and summing up courage and proposing. I wonder how much longer he's going to sleep. I do wish he'd wake up. I'm sure I remembered right what the Western 'seer' prescribed as a good magic dope. Let me think! It was fifteen drops of chloral to every two drops of ammonia mystic—or was it two

drops of chloral to fifteen of——I wonder if I have——. Oh, I'm so nervous! Will the man never wake? I'll go for Nell; no, I'm actually afraid to move. If he should—— Oh, I dare not think! What shall I do? Perhaps I had better take that package out of his coat; but the thirty drops! Oh, why was I ever tempted to go West? Will he never wake up? Goodness! I'll go to pieces if this keeps on. Oh, why did I put that package in his ear? Oh, I mean——!" And as the widow was trying to straighten out the tangle, Winston Rand awoke so suddenly that it nearly frightened the widow to death. "Oh, how you frightened me, Mr. Rand!" "Ah! my dear Mrs. Dangraw," exclaimed Winston, "tell me, is it late? I really forgot myself and fell asleep. Believe me, it was not the company. Do pardon my rudeness, Mrs. Dangraw. Really, it is quite impossible for me to understand how I came to commit such a breach of etiquette. Never recollect doing so before. How long have I been here?" continued Winston, looking at his watch. "Oh, my dear Mrs. Dangraw, 2.30 a.m.! How can I ever apologize for such an awkward blunder? Why didn't you wake me up and send me home?"

"My dear Winston, I knew you were tired and needed rest. You are working too strenuous in business," said Mrs. Dangraw, forgetting all about the fright he gave her a few moments ago. "Give up your business for a while and take a little vacation. Come up here and visit us, leaving all business downtown."

"Give up business!" exclaimed Winston Rand, now thoroughly awake. "Why, my dear lady, I would be

giving up all. Business is the very life of me. What would we do without business? Business is money, And money! Ah, the demon—the god!—the vital issue of to-day—the tree whose branches extend to heaven, and whose roots touch the very depths of hell!"

"Yes! that is too true," remarked Mrs. Dangraw, thoughtfully. "But you must have some diversion from business. The mind needs recreation and change, as well as the body. You cannot be blind to the fact, Winston, that we all are very fond of you here. Come up and visit at Slocum Heights, for a rest up," coyly continued the widow. "Yes, we are all very fond of you. We could drive, dine, have a few extra receptions; in fact, all would endeavor to make your visit one of pleasure. I know you would not only enjoy the change, but you would feel greatly benefited."

"Really, my dear Mrs. Dangraw," answered Winston Rand, "I truly appreciate your kindness. But I am afraid ten weeks of business life would prove more beneficial than one in society's whirl. If one evening in your charming company so intoxicated me that I'd forgot myself and fallen asleep, what would I be at the end of a week?"

"Oh, I am afraid you are a great flatterer," shyly responded Mrs. Dangraw.

"I must hurry away now," said Winston. "I had an engagement at 12 m. I fear I'll lose my practice and have to go out of business if I continue in this trend," as he arose suddenly to leave.

"Awfully abrupt good night!" remarked the widow, half pouting.

"Abrupt!" interrupted Winston Rand. "I should consider it rather a prolonged good morning. A little longer and I'd be in time for breakfast."

"Well, you might as well remain," laughed the widow. "It will not be long now ere breakfast."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Rand. "Quite impossible this time, and remember, I have robbed you of your beauty sleep. Quite an unpardonable offense in itself. If you can really pardon a sleepy fellow like me, with your kind permission, I'll try some time in the near future to prove I do not always forget my manners, or mix matters so badly as to go calling and fall into napping. Unpardonable offense!"

"Will you call to-morrow? Remember the dinner party Wednesday evening in honor of the Blightsons and their three charming daughters from Melbourne. I will look for you," continued Mrs. Dangraw, as Winston Rand raised his hat and hurried down the steps.

"I'll 'phone you later," he said. "Good night!"

"Good morning! you mean," laughed Kitty Dangraw.

"Ah, so it is!" smiled Rand, with a last wave of his hand.

Mrs. Dangraw closed the door, commenting to herself: Well, if I ever saw such a cool leave-taking! Never even shook my hand. What a stupid man! Had that been Sir Edmond Fay, he'd be holding my hand yet. Oh, dear! what a difference in men! But, of

course, Sir Edmond—poor old chap—how could I ever compare handsome, stately Winston Rand with him? I wonder how Winston ever escaped being captured by some woman ere this. Such a head! And what a perfect poise and commanding look! Ah, well, how easy for one to know he's a blue blood and college bred! I'm sure he hailed from Oxford; so English in his manners. Oh, dear! sighed the widow, I really only meant a little harmless flirtation, but I believe I am positively in love with that man. I do hope that "mystic magic" will work some magic charm. Oh, my, I just can't sleep! I'll remain up. Perfect nonsense going to bed; not to sleep but think, think, think, until my head and everything in the room is swimming round and round. I wonder if I am really in love. I wonder if Winston will sleep, dear fellow! Or if that business partner will be up early and talk him to death. Ah, poor fellow! if he'd only come up for a week's stay, he'd know me better, and grow as fond of me as I am of him. I must tell Nell; she'll know just what to do. Oh, if he ever learned the truth that I doped him to get that lock of hair! Really, I was so nervous, fearing every moment that he would come to. I made a shocking bald spot on his head, clipping more than I intended. How easy Nell worked her charm on Josh Slocum! Nell's lucky—always was. But Josh was old. So much in her favor. Is it any wonder there was no sleep for such an active mind as Katheryn Dangraw?

CHAPTER XIII.

JEAN HEARS WINSTON RAND'S STORY.

WHEN WINSTON RAND entered the dining-room for breakfast he was surprised not to find Jean in her accustomed place. Eight o'clock! Yes, this is the hour she always takes breakfast, thought Winston as he beckoned to the waiter. "Tell me, waiter, has Mrs. Nash had breakfast?"

"No, sah! Not here this morning, boss. Mrs. Nash left last night," said the waiter, hurrying out with a tray full of dishes. Winston Rand was visibly affected by this news. Walking quickly from the dining-room he accosted the night-clerk, who was still loitering around the office getting ready to leave.

"Yes, Mrs. Nash settled her bill in full," replied the clerk in answer to Winston's question.

"Where did she go?" hastily enquired Winston.

"Well, Mr. Rand, we did not consider it our business to pry into the lady's affairs, therefore could not say," answered the clerk.

"What I mean," said Winston Rand, "did she leave this hotel to stop at another in town?"

"Oh! no," quickly replied the clerk, "Mrs. Nash has left town."

What could he do? Standing in deep thought a few moments, Winston Rand finally roused himself, settled his bill, saying he'd probably return in a few days. Passing out of the office into the street he again

paused as though dazed and not knowing which way to turn. Finally, walking a block, he turned into the short street leading to the depot. Going straight to the ticket office he inquired for the night agent. He had gone; the day agent was already in his place. He knew nothing about tickets sold in the night. "You might find the night agent in the superintendent's office," continued the day agent. "I saw him go in there about five minutes ago. But you'll have to watch close for him, as he will be going home."

Winston Rand watched the superintendent's office so intently that the letters forming the words "Superintendent's Office" on the door seemed to separate and dance all over that side of the door and wall. Winston began to think he would become cross-eyed if he looked much longer; and another thing, the agent may have gone out by another way. All this he was thinking when, suddenly, he was aroused from his mental calculating by the door opening quickly, which so startled him he almost forgot his errand there. The agent at first seemed very reticent regarding the matter. Didn't know anything about it. "And what's it to me where the lady went?" Here Winston Rand played "foxy" by telling the agent that it wouldn't matter to him either if the lady wasn't his wife.

"Oh, ho!" smiled the agent. "She has given you the shake, has she? Well, I sold a lady a ticket last night about 10 o'clock for Belclair. Now, whether she is the one, that's more than I can say, or whether she really stopped off at Belclair or not. We are not running a detective agency, you know. Call up 'O' and they will

give you 'Twenty-three.' Just what you want, no doubt," laughed the agent, as he left, wishing Winston success.

Winston bought a ticket for Belclair, arriving there at 8 o'clock. He found it a prosperous little city. Everyone seemed to be hurrying to and fro in a business-like manner. Stopping at a news-stand to buy a paper, he was amazed to find, on the first page, Jean's name, in a blazing advertisement: "Free lectures in Olympic Hall all week."

"Blast Slocum Heights," muttered Winston Rand between his teeth. "I can't move two pegs without this woman. What a beastly lie I told that agent! Here she has an education, can swim and paddle her own canoe admirably without me. *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Winston, much excited. A man, physically a woman's superior, but mentally, for lack of education, her inferior. *Mon Dieu!* What shall I do—go drown myself at once and end it all, or continue to trot along submissively while she shines like a great beacon-light, and I, well, like a faithful, trusted watchdog, pull up in the rear? and even now I feel willing to bask in the shadow of that light, useful, perhaps, physically, to keep off intruders. Thus was the trend of Winston's mind ere summoning up courage to see Jean at her hotel. Finally, mounting the winding marble stair leading to the hotel, which was beautifully situated on a high-terraced lawn, affording a charming view of the entire city, Winston Rand carelessly glanced over the register, then walked leisurely into the public parlor, where, to his utter sur-

prise, he came face to face with Jean, in conversation with another party. Bowing good morning in his suave manner, Winston had grace enough to wait until Jean was free to see him, which, of course, she had no intention of doing, since she started to leave the parlor alone. Whereupon Winston seeing this, he stepped up in the most humble fashion, begging a few words with her. As Jean made no reply, he continued:

"Mrs. Nash, why did you treat me in this manner? You know I can do nothing without your help."

"Mr. Rand, I am sure you are laboring under a mistaken idea," said Jean. "You got along nicely before meeting me. I simply wish to discontinue our business relations, and hereafter do business alone—independently. My children need my attention now more than ever. You have the opportunity to marry in the Millionaire Slocum family, and I consider it your golden opportunity, since you have a daughter. It is your duty now to study her interest and throw her in circles where she will meet influential people and people of caste and wealth, just when she needs it most. What is a girl's life from twelve to twenty, if there is no sunshine in those years for her? After taking on the sterner duties of life (marriage and motherhood), which are hers by a divine decree, the days are not gloomy, or her cares heavy, if those youthful years are bright and filled with sunshine: for

Rocking her babe into dreamland,
In her mind pleasant memories throng;
As the scenes shift before her vision,
Making life one perpetual song."

Thus Jean argued with Winston Rand for his child.

"Now, Mrs. Nash, do not be foolish," interrupted Winston. "You know, I am quite sure, of my awful plight. I have not been able to conceal my deficiency from you, an educated woman."

"It is I who advise you not to be foolish, Mr. Rand," said Jean, trying to smile. "You have friends at Slocum Heights; do not discard them so readily."

"Friends!" exclaimed Winston, much excited. "Your dollar's your friend! You only learn this valuable lesson in the school of experience, and sometimes at a dear cost. Friends! *Mon Dieu!* Why, my dear Mrs. Nash," continued Winston, "they would have no use for me at Slocum Heights if they knew, or even dreamed, the secret I am going to tell you now. Although I am sure you do know the truth already—that I cannot write—my—name."

Here, Winston Rand, who had been walking the floor, threw himself on a nearby couch and wept like a child.

"You cannot write your name?" exclaimed Mrs. Nash, much surprised. "You are surely joking, Mr. Rand?

He could not answer her; only shook his head in the negative and wept more violently.

"I understand all now," replied Jean, "regarding the registering and signing of checks."

"Exactly," answered Winston Rand.

"Then, Mr. Rand, take my advice," implored Jean. "It is all the more reason why you should avail yourself of the opportunity of marrying Mrs. Dangraw,

since she is, I know, exceedingly fond of you. I do not believe your deficiency would play any part with her at all. She seems like a reasonable person. And," continued Jean, "where love truly exists, it is blind to many things we would otherwise consider objectionable. It is love that shuts the parents' eyes against the shortcomings of their offspring. It is love that smoothes over many rough places, leading us to heights we otherwise could not attain. It was love that brought a Saviour to the world, who gave His life for many. So it is love that blinds the lover's eyes, which even marriage ofttimes fails to cover."

"O Mrs. Nash!" interrupted Winston, "I detest the looks of that woman. Her persistency has caused me to loathe her company. It was the money I was interested in, nothing more. Now it rises like a vapor to curse my very steps. *Mon Dieu!* Tainted money, indeed! I have always loved money," continued Winston; necessity made me its slave. I never saw anything or anybody worth loving since old Captain Haroway died until I met you. Everything, believe me, Mrs. Nash, in the way of friendship seemed spurious—a sham. I had gone down so deep, it seemed I had touched the very depths of hell itself in my experience, only to find my dollar was my friend. When I did not have it I was smaller than the smallest worm that crawls, with every passing foot upon my head, pressing me farther down, down to blackness and despair. But believe me, Mrs. Nash, upon the honor of a man who values his word even beyond the worshiped dollar, I, Winston Rand, have starved for

days and nearly froze to death in the very awe-inspiring Rockies that girt your western States. But there's a hand, although untrained to the use of pen, has never been stigmatized with crime or dishonored. It is the hand of an unlettered man, tried through the fire of adversity; but it is the hand of an honest man, who owes no man a dollar. I cannot be persuaded to believe you have not noticed my blunderings and shortcomings. But never once have you made me feel my inferiority. At Slocum Heights all they talk from morning till night is culture, polish, style—style, polish, culture—until one's relieved to rid himself of so much sham without depth. Why, Mrs. Nash," continued Winston, "if they dreamed I emerged from other than famed Oxford my doom would be sealed."

"I must acknowledge being greatly surprised myself," remarked Jean. "While ofttimes I may have noticed small deficiencies, I supposed you had some education."

"Why, my dear Mrs. Nash, I candidly confess I cannot either read or write," humbly spoke Winston, burying his face in his hands. I have kept that a secret from the world."

"My! It seems almost impossible to believe, Mr. Rand," interrupted Jean. "I cannot see how you managed to do business with educated people."

"That is the secret," replied Winston. "I managed very nicely, with the aid of my little office boy I picked up in England. But he finally grew homesick, and returned to his home. Since then I have never felt like trusting another."

"Why, how did you manage?" inquired Jean, much interested.

"Well, my appearance and bearing have always been in my favor, and being financially successful of late, I had plenty of money, and that seemed to cover up a multitude of defects in my case. I picked my company only among influential, lucky and thoroughly honest people—people who valued their word as their honor and paid as they went. I cannot read or write, but no man can say I owe him a dollar. I have traveled the world over, and find honesty and industry the only two policies for anyone—rich or poor, learned or unlearned—to hold. With them you can look the world in the face. Not that I am in the least conceited. But a man with suave manners, appearance, a good dresser, shrewd financier, combined with a general knowledge, from travel and experience, of the world, and how to express his ideas interestingly to others, that man will often be found moving in better circles than a man wearing university medals and speaking many tongues, not knowing how to apply his carefully acquired knowledge. Too much university culture and polish often creates unfortunate subjects for insane asylums, instead of bright men and women. Because," continued Winston Rand, "a nonsensical pride conveys some minds so high above their fellow man they are unfitted for anything except to bask in the realm of false ideals, blind to treasures near their very door, ever pursuing the phantom ship afar. If wealth is theirs, they not infrequently spend it in dissipation and debauch here

and there, until their life is wrecked. Never will I forget the good advice the old captain gave me. I did not understand it then; I was too young. But he told me I would in time; and I did."

"Your parents must have died very young," interrupted Jean, "for I see you have had a wide range of experience."

"I will tell you all," replied Winston Rand; "how I cheated myself out of education and everything. My parents were very wealthy, but they belonged to a religious sect in Utah that even as a boy I disliked. My brothers and sisters were highly educated, and moved in the most exclusive social circles. But that matters neither here nor there to me now. I was ten years of age when my father died. I ran away from home, knocking around here, there and everywhere. I did not mind it then. My disposition seemed to be a roving one. Everybody I met in those days was extremely kind to me, and I found plenty of places to act as a chore boy. But knowing I was under age, I lived in constant dread that my mother or brothers would find me and march me back to Utah. I partly worked and begged my way to New York. I got aboard a vessel just leaving port, unknown to anybody. I slipped aboard with a woman and five children, keeping very quiet until the old ship was well on her way out. Then I didn't care who knew I was aboard. I did not try to hide myself as a 'stowaway.' I was too anxious to watch the pilot and captain. Finally, after three days out, the captain began watching me in a manner that caused me no little uneasiness. After

deciding in his mind that it was evident I belonged to no one in particular aboard his ship, he called me to task, even tried to frighten me by declaring, since I had no passport, there was nothing for him to do but throw me overboard, trying my courage so far as to call up two sailors and ordering them to put me in a sack and throw me overboard, which they did, ducking me completely. I am sure I would have been very much frightened had I not noticed, from a small hole in the sack, the old captain wink mischievously at the sailor tying the sack. I knew from his kind old face he would let no harm befall me, although not denying the fact I was badly scared. When they drew me aboard the ship the dear old captain was the first to congratulate me on my narrow escape by taking hold of the back of my collar and shaking me until I hardly knew whether I would rather die by drowning or shaking. Looking at me, and shaking all over with laughter, he said: 'I don't know where you come from, lad, but you have the right stuff in you to make a man. I guess I will keep you as the ship's "mascot." How would you like to call the sea your home? Speak quick! or overboard you go. Have you got a home anywhere on the globe, and do you like the sea?'

"Every energetic nerve in my little, old frame, answered for me. And in my eyes the captain, an old bachelor, past sixty, read the truth, and said, 'Well, I will keep you, lad, for luck.' Back and forth we traveled the sea for three years. Ah! they were my happiest years. Surely a father never was kinder! Nothing was quite good enough for me. A London

tailor made my clothes, which consisted of white flannel, made to a dot like the captain's clothes. On my little white cap, in gilt lettering, was 'Captain Winston.' It is not saying too much to believe the captain loved me; and, as for myself, I will never begin to tell you how much I loved the old fellow. Seated in our cabin one squally night, the sea much rougher than any time since I called the billowy waves my home, Captain Haroway broke the silence by remarking, 'Captain Winston, we go up to London when anchor's cast; you need some clothes.' 'Haven't I enough to do a while yet, captain?' I answered. 'There are nine suits in my chest that is fairly good.' 'Not enough,' answered Captain Haroway, as he continued, 'Captain Winston, what were you thinking about so intently on deck to-day? Have you forgotten, or can it be, lad, you are growing tired of the sea?' 'No, no!' captain, I quickly replied. I have not forgotten, for I think of the same subject very often. Would you like to know what it is?' 'Yes, indeed!' the old man replied. 'Well, Captain Haroway, I was just thinking and trying to reason out the same thing when you spoke a moment ago, and it is this: You are so very good to me I guess I never will be able to pay you back. I would like to call you father, if you didn't object. To say captain is very nice, but it keeps us too far apart.' 'Why, my boy, God bless you!' exclaimed the old man, drawing me nearer to him, 'call me anything you want to. But why is it you wish to call me father, more than anything else?' 'Well, I have tried to think it out, and you have been such a good

friend to me, but "friend" isn't strong enough. I think a father does everything for you without your knowing he is even thinking of you. And that would bring us just about right, captain, I think, for you are always thinking of me.' The old "salt" was in genuine tears. His oldest sailors knew the captain had lost a sweetheart years back. Laying his hand on my head, he said, 'My lad, just as long as I am captain of this ship, or got a home, it is yours, though school advantages aboard a ship are limited to actual experience. I will send you up to London to school, my boy; you must have learning.' 'O captain, no!' I cried, 'I would rather stay with you. I just want to live with you and be with you always.' 'All right, then, my boy,' said the captain, 'you shall remain, and I will engage a tutor aboard ship, if I can find one willing to live at sea a while.' I never reached the age to fully understand and appreciate his good advice until his dear old head rested under the ground in a little English churchyard, near his boyhood sweetheart. Many times, when a young man, working in very humble walks of life, owing to my lack of education, I would meet fine, college-bred men; and while I stand and weep to-day for lack of education, I have much to be thankful for. My health is perfect, while they—ah! poor, miserable wretches!—wept in their agony for the health they so idly threw away in dissipation. How bright were their hopes and aspirations when starting out to meet the world! Honor, education, wealth and position were theirs, and the world met them with the bright smile of hope. But to-day none smile or lend

a cheering word. They stand alone on the brink of the grave, waiting death's kind hand to relieve them of the awful stigma engrafted in the very vitals of their life through dissipation and folly. They knock at the door of science. The wise doctor, looking out, cries, 'Too late!' Every friend they meet seems to shout the cry, 'Too late!' until their own heart and brain, wearied with the hopeless agony, echo back, 'Too late!' Then death, the kindest of all, extends a welcome which they gladly accept, with the grateful cry: 'O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory!' I have no education," continued Winston Rand; "but I have much to be thankful for. I never felt my deficiency while a boy roving around; but now, as a man, I think as a man, and feel the keen, cutting blade of knowledge, as it crosses swords with the rusty blade of ignorance, each day striking deeper into my pride, until it is maddening. I feel the curse of ignorance more than ever now. You and the captain are the only real, true friends I ever met. God knows my heart. I love you both more than I ever did my own people."

"It is not too late yet, Mr. Rand," interrupted Jean. "There are plenty of night schools, which leave no possible excuse for anyone remaining in ignorance, or preventing their mounting to the highest seat of learning. History points out examples galore of illustrious men and women who have surmounted the obstacles found in the way, and by their own perseverance won laurels. With all the modern advantages

it is very easy, if one applies himself, to learn almost anything from observation."

"Yes; I know all you say is very true," replied Winston; "but I never could sum up courage to go to school now at my age."

"Then, you would prefer staying behind to braving the harmless mortification of the schoolroom for the little time it lasted," replied Jean, as curtly as though she was talking to a boy.

"Oh, if you will only take me as a pupil and teach me how to read and write," said Winston, "I know I could learn more quickly from you than anyone. You are so very kind and patient. I would not feel I was forever disgraced. Allow me to be your pupil," pleaded Winston. "I will promise to study so hard. Not once will you regret the task."

Jean tried hard to refuse and stick to her argument of remaining in business independently; but her "good heart" overruled again, and she and Winston Rand continued in partnership.

Every evening, after business, you could see Winston Rand bending over his copy-book.

Oh, when the golden days of youth flee how eager we try to reach out for lost opportunities! But they come not as in a night. It is the patient toiling for the little each day that the child finally grasps enough to stand on a firm footing. It is much harder to apply the mind and acquire steadiness after one's life has been beset with numerous other trials. But Winston Rand was in earnest now, and applied every unoccupied moment to learn.

Mrs. Slocum decided she would have to give up trying to make this match a go as long as Mrs. Nash was on the carpet. Winston Rand had not called in two months. Not for anything would she let Josh Slocum know that she had paid another thousand dollars to the "seer" for Kitty's benefit to catch Winston Rand.

Poor Kitty! Her nerves were so unstrung the evening she clipped that lock of hair, she did not discover until next morning that in her haste to sew up the little seam she ripped to insert the magic mystic powder there must have been a sleight-of-hand trick somewhere, for there, beneath the palm branches in the bay window on the floor lay the wicked-looking little package, clumsily tied with Winston's brown, curly locks.

"No wonder," sighed the widow, "he did not bid me a fond good night; not a trace of mystic magic on him. How could I possibly have made such a blunder, after getting him in such a good, sound sleep? Oh, dear! I ought to have called Nell to do that particular finish. If that had been Nell, instead of blundering me, the wedding bells would have rung out long before this. Oh, my! I wish I was as lucky as Nell. When I think how earnestly I worked to fix that 'fiddlestick' powder and sew up that seam! I dare not remember such an awful experience. I'll bet it is crooked, puckered and— Why, here's the little needle—Oh, horrors! Worse and worse! If I didn't sew that seam with white thread! What will he ever imagine happened to that seam botched up in such a style?

Really," continued the widow, growing more excited, "I have had nothing but trouble, and everything all muddled up since going to see that "seer" on the Pacific Coast. I am afraid that is an unlucky business to get running after, for Nell's baby, instead of being even a plain, every-day boy, let alone a Lord Byron that she paid for, it came to light a puny, squawky, red-faced girl, with no marks of greatness, or any indications that she will be anything for some time but a "squawker." Why, that child has squalled and squalled for three weeks. She will either kill herself or the rest of us with her noise. Nell is a little skeptical about the genuine, all-round worth of her "seer" now, although she will not allow anyone else to doubt his worth. I would not either had I caught a millionaire with that bait. And it must have been the mystic magic. What else, thought Kitty, reflectively. Ding, ding! Oh, dear! The door bell. Really, my nerves are so upset that even the bell startles me!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ACROSS THE RIVER AT MIDNIGHT.

MRS. NASH and Winston Rand had accumulated some money, and therefore decided to settle down in an establishment of their own. St. Paul, Minn., was selected as their residential city. Yes, this was the city they preferred.

Being in Chicago, they shopped for two weeks, looking for "extra" furnishings suitable to their tastes. Everything was bought now, and their house thoroughly furnished from top to bottom in a most up-to-date manner. After spending six months in getting everything in running order, when they should have felt like taking their easy chair and noticing the result of their labor, then a sudden impulse rises and orders another start, discovering that wasn't the town to live in.

"Where is the map?" inquired Jean. "Ah, yes! There is the very place—Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Why didn't we see this ere now? Yes; that's the city."

A car was chartered, filled with household goods and shipped to Philadelphia.

"We are in luck," remarked Winston, as he entered the hotel parlor, returning from a house-hunting trip. "I have rented Colonel Dale's new home. He is going to Europe."

"Ah! luck favors us," replied Jean. "I knew this was the city as soon as I saw it on the map."

So fitting up in a new style to suit the most fastidious taste, spending several thousand dollars for more furnishings, after everything seemed arranged and in its proper place, once more, after strenuous labor, when they should have felt like enjoying the comfort of this restive home, the old restless spirit reaches out for change and variety. In Quaker meetings the Friends wait for the Spirit to move them, but they are liberal in this, respecting the stranger in their gates. They do not enforce their religious restrictions on others. So Jean and Winston Rand did not wait for the Spirit to move them. They chartered a car and moved themselves. Again the map is consulted.

"How would Chicago do?" Jean ventured to inquire.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Winston. "I did not favor the Windy City when we shopped there. But how would St. Louis do?"

"Oh, never!" replied Jean. "The Mississippi would rise and swallow everything. Let us return to Belclair."

"No, no!" interrupted Winston, "that is too near the Slocums. Since we cannot seem to decide let us go to Niagara. Possibly the Maid o' the Mist will invigorate both our mental and physical conditions against this 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' fashion we have drifted into."

After spending two weeks in this delightful spot of nature's handiwork, Rochester was the city next in turn to receive the chartered car. Here a beautiful home was rented and furnished throughout. They also had horses and carriages to drive out through the

fine surrounding country, to beautiful Charlotte Harbor, about twelve miles from the city, this being a favorite drive.

Here and there the Indian and his squaw live in their picturesque wigwams, swinging their little papooses in rough-made hammocks, while the squaws weave baskets and knit lace. The chief and male members of the tribe care for the horses and carriages of visitors in the most courteous manner, that leave not only pleasant memories in the mind regarding these wandering tribes, but also the fact that Indians do not necessarily have to be dead Indians to be good Indians.

The weather during August was exceptionally pleasant, not the least uncomfortable for summer. Jean and Winston Rand had taken in almost all the drives within twenty-five miles of the city. They were just growing accustomed, as one would suppose, to the town and its surroundings when, as usual, the map was consulted, and it was emphatically decided that this was anything but the right town.

"Ah!" exclaimed Winston, "here is a fine little place along the 'Maumie' river. I can tell from the looks of that place on the map it must be the place."

For the fourth time the car was chartered and everything shipped again.

Orlando was a pretty little city, with broad streets, lined with beautiful, tall, waving trees. Vineland Avenue, the brag street of the city, claimed the prettiest trees, tall willows, whose branches had met and interwoven themselves in such a manner that they formed a complete archway through the entire avenue.

Here, in a fine old-fashioned house, terraced back from the street, on a fine lawn, with large roomy barn and excellent garden, Jean and Winston Rand decided to locate. Every gossip, near and far, looked in wonder and expectation for great things to come from people having enough ready cash to rent the "Comstock" homestead, which had remained idle several years, at least since Colonel Comstock's death.

"They are going to keep horses, carriages, a cow, chickens, a gardener, coachman and other servants. Rich people, of course! Have they bought half the town, or what?"

Never in the Colonel's time was there such a look of prosperity. In due time the townspeople, being completely captivated with the way the newcomers spent money, bowed approval—from the banker, the preacher, the professional as well as the non-professional, down to the chore boy. All concluded they were the right kind of people to have in a town to build it up. If the wind would only blow a few more like them from prosperous fields, the town could in a short while well afford a statue of prosperity in the public square.

Jean decided she was prosperous enough now to have her children enjoy some of the fruits of her labor, instead of being confined in an institution longer.

She and Winston Rand talked it over. Winston felt the same regarding his daughter, and they decided to bring the little folks home.

It was the latter part of January. The weather was bitter cold. Jean had made up her mind to go, and did not intend to allow a small thing like cold to deter

her plans. She started early in the morning, with her heart light and happy over the happiness in store and the joy awaiting the little ones. They would have plenty of outdoor exercise. She stopped first at the home for Edna. The poor child jumped for joy, not having seen her mother in two years, nor dreaming of seeing her so soon. It was a thorough surprise to Edna. The happiness that beamed in her little face when given another surprise, by learning her mamma had come to take her home, was beyond description. In her little heart she had dreamed of it all, and built huge castles in the air when sleep forbid to close her eyes. But she did not know just when her dreams and air castles would really materialize.

Jean's next stop was at the boys' home, where little curly-headed Armond stayed. Here Jean encountered some difficulty in gaining any satisfaction for a while —the little cloud, thought Jean, that always seems to crowd in on the sunshine.

At first the matron positively refused her even seeing little Armond, until Jean insisted that she must see her boy. She had come a long distance and intended taking him home. "Oh," exclaimed the matron, "that is different! We are always glad to have one less to care for, where the army is so large and so much care demanded," hurrying from the room and returning in a few moments with little Armond, his head tightly bandaged.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jean, as the little fellow entered the parlor and ran to her arms. "My darling! Oh! what is the matter with my darling child?"

And well she might ask. What a pitiful sight for a mother, who had left her boy looking handsome and bright, his golden curls falling picturesquely over his forehead! Now the golden curls she prided in so much all matted, and his little head in a mass of sores.

"Oh, what is the matter with my child?" again pleaded Jean, weeping and nearly frantic.

"Ah! the little boy," explained the matron in her quiet manner, "he caught this malady from wearing another child's cap, whose head was very much diseased. We are very sorry, indeed, madam, about it!"

"Oh, how could anyone be so careless as to let diseased children play among healthy children?" cried Jean, much distressed. "Oh, my darling is ruined, ruined! and how hard I worked to pay for his care here in an orphans' home! I did not have to pay in an institution of this kind, but did it out of my good heart, because I was proud and could not bear to ask anyone to care for my children without pay. I was young and inexperienced. I did not know, and thought this was the best place for them at the time. And, oh! this is the result," she said, as she bowed her head, with both arms around little Armond's neck, and wept.

"Yes, my child," interrupted the matron, mildly; "you must remember also we did not have to take your child. This is only an orphans' home. Out of charity we accepted your little boy until, as you stated at the time, you could do better and care for him."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Jean, in her excitement. "I

see it all now. It is the curse of their father not having pride and honor enough to care for his family. Some women would not care either. But I love my children, and considered this the best thing to do under the circumstances."

"My child," replied the matron, "it is not our fault. Our institutions are public, and our lives are given to serve the unfortunate poor. The waif and orphan drift under our shelter from the storms of life and influences that are varied as life itself. Misfortune, sickness, sin and death scatter members of the human family in different channels. We never can tell, my child, what breaks up the home. Our doors are open to receive the maimed, the halt and lame—in fact, the unfortunate children in whatever condition they fall. We try to do our best for them, sometimes failing to do all we would like. Life, my dear, is full of shattered roses. We try to pick up the fragments that remain. We, too, are but human, and must often ask God for strength and courage to do our duty well."

"Oh, forgive my thoughtlessness!" interrupted Jean. "I know you do all you can. I was wrong in speaking so hastily. If a man does not care for his children, no one should find fault or condemn you and others who have, I know, in many instances, left homes of refinement and luxury to devote your lives to the homeless and friendless. Yes, I was hasty; but forgive me," said Jean, as she rose to leave.

"Ah, my child, I understand and freely forgive. I, too, was a mother," answered the little French matron, "and understand a mother's love."

It was late when Jean reached the depot. A heavy snow had fallen, and the cold was intense. The children, while being comfortably dressed, had nothing but the clothes they wore, therefore no extra baggage to be looked after.

Jean just had time to purchase her tickets and get aboard the train when it started out of the station, steaming and snorting, westward.

It was 9 p. m. when at last, after two days' journey, the train pulled into the little station opposite Orlando, covered with snow and icicles.

"Our journey will soon be over," remarked Jean to Armond and Edna, whose eyes had not closed scarcely a moment since the trip began. Childlike, anxious to see everything after being shut up so long, they were afraid to sleep for fear something might occur and they would miss seeing it.

A worse experience confronted them. The Maumie river, which always rose to a great height during the winter and early spring, doing much damage, was far past the record mark, and was still rising, the bridge being completely submerged. The only thing visible in the water showing a bridge had ever been there, was the tops of a long line of freight cars, stalled before the fast-rising tide entirely covered the bridge.

"No crossing to-night!" shouted the watchman, as the people hurried toward the bridge entrance. "No crossing to-night!" he shouted once more.

"Oh! I've got to get home on business some way," remarked a lawyer, impatiently walking up and

down. "I don't like the looks of that crossing, but it's business. Hate like the deuce to risk it," he continued, looking on the still fast rising tide.

"You cross at your own risk," shouted the watchman.

"If crossing is possible, sir," interrupted Jean, stepping up to the watchman, "I'm willing to risk it. I must get home to-night."

"Madam," replied the watchman with much firmness, "it is an impossibility; the bridge is completely submerged. Nothing but cars to walk on. The brakeman just in, reports they're all ice, and in many places some of the cars entirely submerged, and the water still rising. You could not possibly get across safe, and having two children you never could make it. You'd find you had more than you bargained for. No crossing to-night!" again shouted the watchman, as a train full of eager passengers arrived, looking inquiringly as they gazed out, seeing no bridge, and the station partly covered with water in places.

"If the brakeman crossed from the other side," declared Jean, growing anxious, "I'm going to risk crossing."

"Well, madam, if you are going to make the attempt with those two children, you're not going alone. I'll assist you if I can," ejaculated the lawyer.

"At your own risk! At your own risk!" shouted the watchman. "Remember, at your own risk! It is a two-mile stretch."

No one else felt sufficiently brave to start. So Jean with her two children and Lawyer Osborn started, with part of the crowd behind exclaiming, "Oh, come

back! Don't risk such perilous danger!" But on they went until the people's and watchman's cries died out in the distance.

"Now, madam," remarked Lawyer Osborn, "you follow me very carefully. I'll take the little fellow—easy now, there's an icy place. Be careful how you step."

"O mamma, I'm all over in my shoetops full of water," exclaimed Edna, as a wave swept over the box car, causing them all to stand still a moment on the rocking cars.

"We'll step a little further now," continued Lawyer Osborn. "Careful now! Here's a coupling. Stand there, little man, till I help your mamma and sister over. There we are, over three cars. So far, so good. Here's another icy place and coupling. Careful, madam! Don't attempt to step over unaided with that little girl," said Lawyer Osborn, as Jean started, but slipped. "The cars are very icy. I'll give you a lift. Careful, now! Don't move, little fellow, till mamma and sister get over."

On and on in this fashion, over ice-covered cars for a bridge, they slowly crept until the other side was reached. Persistence and courage crowned the little company's efforts, as they safely reached the Orlando side, after picking their way for one hour over the most unique bridge that ever spanned the Maumie.

Jean, knowing she never could have accomplished the perilous trip without Lawyer Osborn's aid, thanked him over and over, knowing, too, to proffer

money to such a noble man would be nothing short of gross insolence.

"That is all right, madam. Glad I could be of service to you. I was anxious to get home myself," said Lawyer Osborn, and we were all company for one another."

Jean found another surprise waiting. Her home, which stood back three blocks from the river, had always been considered far away from the danger-line. The river had reached the terrace wall, covering the two lower steps. People living on the two streets below were forced to the second and third stories, and compelled to row out through the windows in boats, their basements and first floors being completely submerged.

Jean's house being terraced high, and standing far back, protected by the solid stone wall from the sidewalk, there was no immediate danger of their home being damaged, unless the river, which had already overstepped its bounds, should continue to rise, which was very unlikely.

It proved impossible to attempt the other two trips that week. But two weeks later Jean started for her oldest boy, Ralph, a manly-looking lad of twelve years. On her return, two days later, Winston Rand met them as they entered the door, at once giving Ralph a sarcastic look, remarking as he snapped his fingers: "That boy is too small to work or attend horses." Edna was too small to work; Armond also. Poor youngsters, it was plain to be seen they were going to be in the way from Winston Rand's point of view.

How easy it seems for a man or woman to find one of the opposite sex to care for them, while in many cases, generally speaking, they only harbor ill-will toward the other's children—appreciating the fact that there are exceptions to the rule. Edna and Armond, the smaller children, seemed to manage in a way to get along with Winston Rand. But there was cross swords between he and Ralph from start to finish. If things went wrong in business, in the house—anywhere, in fact—Ralph was to blame. And Winston Rand's vials of wrath were continually being poured out upon him. Jean must not spend too much time with her own children. It not only spoiled them, but kept them in a "sassy" mood toward him.

Jealousy was the keynote to Winston Rand's nature of late. The children had to be kept busy doing something all the time. As fast as one task was accomplished he readily found another. There was no play or foolishness tolerated. It all helped to make them "sassy." Under no consideration must they even stick so much as their little nose in the parlor. They would spoil things. Their proper place was in the rear. Just let Winston Rand see one sitting on the front steps, or even going out or coming in the front door, the look he gave them was enough. They never committed the offense the second time.

Ah, how changed the scene! His own little girl, Mabel, had just arrived from the good French Sisters of Mercy. She must be dressed three or four times a day, sit in the parlor with papa, enjoy the passing breeze from the front veranda, in her own little ham-

mock or lawn swing; or, better still, go driving with papa behind the spirited team. She was one, while Ralph, Edna and Armond were three—quite a crowd —too many entirely to drive in a gentleman's carriage.

Things came to a climax with Ralph when he openly resented an insult from Winston Rand, who, seeing his opportunity, ordered Ralph from the house. Think you, my gentle reader, he, a boy of twelve, cringed under such an insult, or ran to inform his mother? Not so; but with the blood of a glorious independent American in his veins he turned his face toward the world; nor flinched to accept the bitter cup before him, of seeking honest employment. Being a bright boy, men were not slow to see and appreciate having a boy of Ralph's stamp around. He found he could care for himself and be treated respectfully and humanely by strangers. So Ralph was proud and happy to think he was thoroughly independent of asking help from home.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ARRIVAL OF MRS. RAND.

It was during the summer, when the weather was very warm, and Winston Rand and Jean had been talking for weeks over the possibility of getting away from business and rusticating in the mountains or some watering resort. It was the evening before starting for the mountains. Their plans were all made. Seated in the library talking, suddenly the bell rang violently. Winston Rand quickly stepped to the door, expecting to find, what he thought, a crowd of mischievous boys ringing the bell for sport, when to his utter surprise a short, stout woman whom he recognized, accompanied by two men, entered without invitation. The woman exclaimed in very exciting tones, pointing to Winston Rand, "Officer, that man is my husband. And— Oh, my darling child!" she cried, embracing Mabel, who had run out in the hall at the sound of the woman's voice. "My darling! My darling little child! They stole you from your loving mother. My child! my child! My lovely little angel!"

"Madam," interrupted the officer, "we have no time to waste. What are your orders?"

"Oh, arrest that man! He wronged me and kidnapped my child—my darling child! Take him away to prison! Oh, don't let him escape! Oh, my lovely little pet, jewel, they stole you! Take him away! I will take possession of everything here."

"No, you will not!" exclaimed Jean, who, until now, was a silent witness of the scene.

"Who are you?" exclaimed Mabel's mother. "Oh, could I have believed it then! O officer, take this woman too! She told me a fat, black-eyed woman would steal my husband—and it was herself. Oh, take her away too—away, away! Oh, my darling child! Little angel!"

"What have you to say, madam?" inquired the officer, turning to Jean.

"The furnishings and everything, both in and out of doors in this establishment, belong to me personally," replied Jean.

"I am sorry," said the officer, "but I guess you will have to go with us to clear up this matter."

"Yes; arrest her, officer!" exclaimed Mabel's mother.

"No, madam, we have no authority to arrest anyone save your husband," replied the officer. "This lady will merely accompany us to have a better understanding regarding whose ownership is right."

Never did officers of the law take prisoners more against their will, for the generosity of Winston Rand and Jean had traveled far and wide. And who but could say they were good citizens, always among the first to respond to whatever cause called for help, financially or otherwise? So, reluctantly, the officers, forced to do their duty, led them away, followed by Mabel's mother.

No plausible charge was preferred against Jean. But Mrs. Rand insisted on her being detained until the

following morning, while Winston Rand was led off to a cell.

The district attorney, having private apartments in the building and seeing it was too late to act in Jean's behalf, placed these apartments at her disposal until morning, rather than see her occupy a cell, as he knew she had always been kind to other people in trouble.

Mrs. Rand could hardly wait to return to the house, as she intended to inspect everything therein. From one room to another she sailed with the air of "I am lord of all I survey."

Two small rooms in the rear, upstairs, over the dining-room, were occupied by Jean's two children—Edna and Armond. They were fast asleep, and knew nothing of the turmoil and tumult below until Mrs. Rand rushed into the room, lighting the gas and suddenly awakening the children out of a sound sleep. Close at her heels walked William, the faithful coachman—a man well preserved, in his forties, of fine physical appearance. He had seen better days, but misfortune had tried him as now it was trying Jean and Winston Rand. He had passed through the crucible and fire of experience that makes one worthy of confidence from others. He had promised Jean, the last thing as she was leaving the house, that he would look after her belongings and see that no harm befell her children until she gave him further orders.

"Are these your children?" inquired Mrs. Rand, as two sleepy-looking youngsters peered at her as she lit the gas.

"No, madam!" replied William; "these are the madam's children."

"What! That woman's children?" cried Mrs. Rand. Merciful heaven! I did not know she had children." And for the first time her haughty manner changed. The mother-heart, akin the world over, awoke to feelings of sympathy for these helpless children, if nothing else, as they sat up in bed crying and begging:

"O William, tell mamma to come here! Mamma! Boo-hoo, mamma! mamma!" cried little Armond and Edna.

"Oh, I would not have given her this trouble had I dreamt she, too, was a mother and had these little ones!"

By this time it dawned on the children that something must be wrong, as their mamma never was so long coming before. Sitting up in bed, trembling and crying as though their little hearts would break, the very tears changed the whole tenor of Mabel's mother. She, too, cried, as she held Mabel on her lap, placing one arm around Edna and Armond.

"You poor, little innocent things! Don't cry!" she pleaded, while the big tears ran down hers and Mabel's face like rain. "Don't cry, dear little ones! I will try and bring your mamma back to you. She will be back. Now, don't cry! Oh, not for anything would I have caused you poor little things this suffering! You are punished more than the real offenders. That's good children, don't cry!"

"Where is my mamma?" asked Edna, between her sobs.

"Boo-hoo! William, bring my mamma back!" cried little Armond, raising his little head and looking with oh, such an appeal into Mrs. Rand's face while his little teeth chattered!

"Yes, dear! Don't cry!" replied Mrs. Rand. The scene was too much for her. She turned, leaving the room with Mabel, only to encounter William in the hall, his head bowed in tears as he heard the pitiful cry of those innocent children appealing to him without being able to help them.

"I care not how much those grown people suffer," said Mrs. Rand; "but not for one hundred dollars would I have caused those little ones to suffer like this. I will never forget their pleading looks; they will haunt me to my dying day. That boy's big blue eyes will never leave my memory," continued Mrs. Rand, wiping a big tear from her eyes as she walked through the hall.

Next morning William was up bright and early. Not that he slept, for neither he nor the two children slept at all. If he did doze at all, he was suddenly reminded of the previous day's drama by either Edna or Armond pulling at his coat sleeve to inquire:

"William, will my mamma be back to-morrow?" or, "Can I go to see my mamma?"

He could not count the number of times he had heard these questions during the night and wee hours of morning.

The negro cook got balky, declaring the sight of a policeman in the house where she was employed reflected dishonor on her if she remained another day.

And having to leave so suddenly, without her rightful week's warning, she would have to collect an extra week's wages.

"You can leave any time you like," replied William; "and your money is ready."

"Yes; but my extra week's wages I must have," responded the cook.

"You can have that, and welcome," answered William. "I have got money to pay you. I am not afraid to advance enough to pay you off. It is worth four dollars to rid the house of your kind."

Paying no more attention to her, William went on his own way of attending to whatever had to be done. It must be stated, fortunately William was a good cook. He fried chicken and cooked hot biscuits. When he had a goodly, tempting lunch prepared he washed and dressed little Armond and Edna, and, writing a note, sent them with the dainty breakfast down to the public building, where their mother was.

How delighted they were only those who understand the wonderful trusting heart of a little child can, under similar circumstances, realize the joy it gave them to see their own dear mamma after a night of wakeful unrest. Jean, too, was overjoyed to see her little ones. And oh, how much she appreciated the thoughtfulness of William to cook her such a nice breakfast, whether she had appetite to enjoy it or not!

Jean gave Edna two dollars to buy herself and Armond candy on their way home. But, poor little frightened things! no doubt the immense

public buildings they had so often pranced by at will when out walking, now the interior, with its severe-looking offices and grave-faced attendants, perhaps all this frightened them too much to stop anywhere, but do as William instructed—"Go and come straight back home; talk to no one." When Edna and Armond walked in the side yard their little eyes bulged out again with fright at the sight of a big policeman talking to Maggie, the cook, and their brother Ralph. Trouble never comes singlehanded.

Ralph had thought to play a joke on the cook by hiding her pompadour wig. Some neighbor boys suggested the idea of the chimney being the best hiding place, whereupon Ralph climbed up on the roof and placed the black pompadour on top of the chimney. He had scarcely turned his back to come down ere a puff of wind blew the pompadour into the chimney, where, of course, it was destroyed, and the odor of burning hair pervaded the air for blocks. The cook came to the door, wondering where that hair was burning.

"Your pompadour blew into the chimney, Maggie," exclaimed one of the boys.

"Well, some ob yo' boys done put it in de chimney; 'cause why, how else would it git dar?" responded Maggie, showing temper. "Now, which one done it? Yo' might as well tell, fo' I'se goin' to git de policeman;" and, one happening to pass just at that moment, she called him in.

"It was Ralph!" shouted the O'Sully boys, as the policeman came up.

"Well, what is the trouble now?" he asked.

"I'se wants yo' to arrest dese boys; dey done frow'd my pomp'dour down de chimney; it am done burned up."

"How much was your pompadour?" inquired the officer.

"Two dollars!" exclaimed the cook; "an' I'se won't take one cent less; 'cause why, it wa' imported."

"Well, Ralph, how much chink have you to settle for a pompadour?" smiled the officer. "Do you think you can stand the price for a new one this morning?"

"I haven't got that much with me this morning, officer," said Ralph, never once turning traitor on the boys who stood around, and who were as deep in the mire of destroying the pompadour as himself. They were all in for the joke; but Ralph had to shoulder the blame.

"Well, if yo' got no money, yo' go to jail!" shouted the cook, much enraged.

It was at this moment of the discussion that little Edna and Armond walked up, and, hearing Maggie tell the policeman to take Ralph away, this was too much. Armond cried and Edna cried. Then suddenly Edna thought about the candy money. Reaching down in her little pocket, Edna produced the two dollar bill and slipped it in the big policeman's hand to pay the cook. This calmed her wrath, and William lost no time in paying her off, including the extra week, to rid the house of her like.

On the right-hand side of the Comstock homestead

lived an Irish widow and her six children; on the left, a large Jewish family.

Mrs. O'Sully, the widow, kept boarders. And a hard pull it was, too; six children to feed, clothe, shod and school.

The Rands kept a cow for their own private use. But having more milk and butter than they could use or really knew what to do with, they decided Mrs. O'Sully, the widow, needed all the help she could get to make ends meet. So the over-supply was given her gratis. Like the Slocums, Jean knew the widow O'Sully could use everything in that line very profitably where there were boarders.

From the time the new-comers leased the Comstock place, Mrs. O'Sully never paid a milk or butter bill. While Winston Rand and Jean possessed some peculiar traits, that was one of their ways of being neighborly. And if all the "God-bless-you!" "God-bless-you!" exclamations from Mrs. O'Sully had turned to dollars, Jean would never have had to concern herself more about business. But alas, hnuman nature! How versatile, shifting and changing the scenes in a surprising manner ofttimes! Ah, yes! Pray, lift the veil and let mine eyes see the light, and learn, O Life, of thee. As a little child seeking knowledge, teach thou me. Thy panoramic views stretch from the cradle to the grave. The mind is ever reaching out and searching for the new. To the restless, imaginative mind sometimes the scenes seem to lag. But not so. Fast or slow, the pendulum is ever swinging in the great school-room of life; and one by one, and two by two, the

pupils pass out, and join the ranks in the great realm of eternity.

When the little difficulties came to the inmates of the Comstock place, Mrs. O'Sully was the first neighbor to positively refuse any member of that establishment admittance to her house, or even to serve the children their meals for pay, claiming she was mortally disgraced enough in having such neighbors near her. So her doors and windows were barred against them, as though leprosy had suddenly appeared. Never once had the Jewish family received a pint of milk, or a pound of butter. They, of course, being in good circumstances themselves, had all those things at home. A hundred-and-fifty-foot lawn divided them from the Comstock property.

When they saw the dark cloud over their neighbor's house, they were the first to offer assistance, by sending for the children and William to come over and take their meals with them. Ah, how plainly one discerns the good Samaritan in either Jew, Gentile or Christian! The golden rule lived, not merely preached. William being in full charge of the house and children, courteously declined, and, thanking them very kindly in behalf of the family, assured them that he would be very grateful to accept their kindness should the children need anything.

The next evening, about 9 o'clock, Mrs. Rand returned with two moving vans and eight men to clear the house. William answered the door bell. Mrs. Rand, with a wild flourish of her hand, ordered the men to carry out everything.

But William showed he was still at the helm, being too quick for their move of attempting to brush him aside. Placing himself right in the doorway, with both arms stretched out, he exclaimed, "Not one step further! Show your right, and by whose permission you have the authority to enter this house and strip it of its belongings."

"The right!" cried Mrs. Rand, much excited. "Why, fool, man! I'm that man's legal wife! Who has a better right here? How dare you talk to me—the real, genuine, legal wife—in that manner?"

"There are other parties having some claims and rights in this house, madam," retorted William, calmly, never moving from his position.

"You are a dummy regarding law. No one has any legal rights but a wife! And I am that one. Enter the house, please, and remove everything," commanded Mrs. Rand again, wildly flourishing her hand toward the eight men standing around.

"Not one stick shall you move," replied William, "under any condition."

"Who are you, anyway, claiming so much authority?" inquired Mrs. Rand, greatly enraged. "Why, if I was a man and had a pistol I'd blow your head off. I say I am going to remove this furniture."

"Only over my dead body," calmly spoke William.

"See here, lady," interrupted the colored driver, "dese people wa' pretty good customers ob mine afore yo' upset everything. If dar goin' to be any shootin' 'fray, me an' my men am goin' to leave. An' we has to hab extra pay, lady, for dis outin' in de night, 'cause

our horses an' men done ought to be sleepin'. You's nebber mention 'bout any shootin' an' disturbances bein' 'liable. It am very perceivable dat a lawyer am more necessary for de distribution ob de defugalities dan a movin' van. A special order, lady," continued the colored driver; "we'll hab to trouble yo' fo' our pay."

"Never mind the pay!" retorted Mrs. Rand. "I expect to turn the contents of this house into money to pay my expenses. I'll go right down and have my lawyer come up and settle this ownership, and clear the house. I am the only one entitled to rights here," remarked Mrs. Rand, snapping her fingers in William's face, as he closed the door, leaving her to settle the moving question with the men.

William never closed his eyes, keeping a faithful watch for the return of the disturbers. But nothing further disturbed the peace of the night.

Next morning things began to buzz and hum early. Mrs. Rand marched up with two officers and her lawyer, to take possession; at least try to.

They found William as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. No money could tempt him to betray the confidence intrusted to him, especially at such an hour.

"See here," remarked the lawyer aside, "we've got a hundred dollars for you in cash, right now. What's it to you who gets this plunder, or where it goes? Besides, I've got a pretty good place in view. I can recommend you there at once if——"

"Stop! stop, sir, right there! The State prisons are

full of your kind, and some who are better. I am in charge of this house, and the contents belong to me while in my care," proudly responded William.

"These children," spoke the lawyer, "will be put in charge of the city."

"Not one finger shall the city or anyone else lay on these children. They, too, are in my charge," said William.

After loitering around fully an hour, talking and consulting, and going down to see Winston Rand, the lawyers returned, saying, "Things look gloomy."

"What's the news?" hastily inquired Mrs. Rand.

"Am sorry to state, Mrs. Rand," replied her lawyer, "the verdict seems against us. Everything in the house, barn, live stock, even money in the bank, belongs to Mrs. Nash, personally. Winston Rand hasn't a dollar to help himself, unless she sees fit to give it to him."

"Fool! fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Rand, walking the floor. "To let a woman own him body and soul!"

"Well," continued her lawyer, "I understand she is the principal spoke in the business; in other words, she has the education. What little he knows, she has taught him. I should judge, trying to teach a man his A, B, C's, was no easy task. And he told me himself he could not write a line when he met her."

"I know he had no education," replied Mrs. Rand. "But he's a capital financier. He is a man who always made plenty of money. And I'm going to get it. This is all a trick, being played to euchre me and my darling out. But we will see! we will see!"

It was late in the afternoon, when the judge ordered the release of Mrs. Nash. Mrs. Rand was in high glee over one thing. If she could not get the contents of the house, she had, at least, succeeded in breaking up their home. And sudden sales, now, of the horses, carriages, and other stock meant a sacrifice and great loss.

Not so; these people had friends, and, as the French say, *"À quelque chose malheur est bon."* Dr. Newbury, the veterinary surgeon, was on hand bright and early, almost as soon as Jean reached the house. He offered to buy all the live stock and barn contents at her own price. This was a secret closely guarded, as others who came to buy were told there was nothing to sell.

About 10 p. m. the beautiful span of horses was harnessed to the double carriage, and William was the driver. A woman, heavily veiled, accompanied by two children, got in and drove about six blocks, where the carriage stopped, and two men walked rapidly up to the carriage. One stepped in, seating himself beside the driver, and saying, as he shook hands with his companion, "Good-bye, my friend. You will hear from us in a week or two."

"Good-bye," responded the man, who was no other than Dr. Newbury. As the last sound of the carriage died away, he walked off in a thoughtful mood toward his own home.

It was Dr. Newbury, who made a public speech in the court building, defending Winston Rand and Jean,

and denouncing the whole affair as a piece of blackmail to extort money.

All night they drove along beautiful country drives, until the State line was reached. It was a perfect night. The moon shone brightly, almost equaling the light of day—perfect indeed, as though ordered for the occasion. Mile after mile they traveled over one of the finest roads, here and there curving round a mountain bend, then crossing a rustic bridge, or fording small streams, and now alongside the tracks of the Grand Trunk lines, where now and then a train shot past like an arrow, changing the monotony of the long drive. Arriving at a small country roadhouse, just at daybreak, all stopped for breakfast. On learning the entire party could be accommodated as long as they cared to stay, arrangements were accordingly made for an indefinite time.

William remained all day and one night, in order to rest his horses, then reluctantly bade all good-bye, and turned the horses' heads back toward "Orlando," facing their future home and owner, Dr. Newbury, who had not only purchased the live stock and barn contents, but had hired faithful William as his coachman.

Winston Rand, Jean and her two children were now rusticating far from the scene of the past week's disturbance—far out in the country, with nothing but long walks to break the monotony. The children were kept strictly to themselves, hardly allowed to look at any one, and under no consideration permitted to mix

in any way, shape or form with the innkeeper's children, who stood off, gazing in wonder at the five strangers, as though some special performance was expected from each one. Here, away in the woods, ten miles from the nearest railroad station—what a contrast to the busy life Winston Rand and Jean had lived! They could not content themselves longer than two weeks, so took their departure for Toronto, Canada. Jean found traveling around with two children, stopping in hotels, was rather too expensive, especially after the enormous outlay of the past six weeks. There was but one course to pursue, and that was, to place the children in school. It was during vacation time, but they would receive better care, and it would be far cheaper than in hotels.

Everything being in confusion, no thought was given to clothes, style, or how things fit, when the carriage drove out of Orlando and pursued its moonlit course over the State line. Everything had been stored away. Funds were getting pretty low, owing to the sudden demand for ready cash in hotels, railroads and other public places.

Edna was now nine years of age, and was placed in a convent boarding school. It took her some time to grow accustomed to the way of doing nothing but amuse oneself, since in the home she was made to work. Some of the children laughed at her dress, as she walked out among them the first day, wearing "candy-stick" stockings and carpet slippers, and a homely striped dress, cut on the bias—in reality a

worse looking valentine than any immigrant could ever hope not to look like.

Poor little Edna! She was blessed with a sweet disposition, and if her little heart, with all the scenes she had already passed through, felt crushed by the remarks and laughter of the other little girls better off in dress, she said nothing. The trials she had suffered of late seemed suddenly to lift her above small things; in fact, with all her "funny dress" (as some of the children termed it) every inmate saw beneath the exterior garb a character worth cultivating —one commanding respect. Suddenly, as if by magic, the children forgot the dress, forgot to laugh. They saw only the little girl in their midst,and knew they liked her for herself alone. And on learning she could outshine them all in dressing dolls, though she owned none, they were positive their love for her was genuine. They flocked around her with their boxes filled with doll rags, to help them out.

"Oh! you mustn't work here," exclaimed one little girl, as Edna went for the broom to brush up the doll scraps. "This is a very fashionable boarding school, and it is vacation. We don't do anything but play now, and study old, dull, commonplace things when school opens in September. Oh, dear! how nice it would be if we always had vacation."

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW ROBERT NASH SPENT TEN YEARS.

ROBERT NASH having left his wife and children to go elsewhere in search of better business prospects, we will turn back a few pages and see how well he succeeded, and how greatly his family was benefited by his clever experience.

He had just time to purchase a ticket for Jesup, and had not been aboard the train long when it made its first stop at a small station. There was nothing about the place to indicate business of any kind: a few lazy-looking, half-clad "pickaninnies," too sleepy-looking to open their eyes wide enough to even notice the train. Four passengers—three men and one woman, heavily veiled—got on just as the last whistle blew. The car was not crowded, but the woman, in an unceremonious manner, sat down beside Robert Nash. He did not speak, nor did she take particular notice of him. The conductor, when collecting tickets, looked at the woman, then at the man, for he noticed her ticket also read Jesup.

The old "Side Wing" was a monotonous road to travel on at best, with its one passenger coach and engine, with part of the coach divided for baggage and mail, and the rick-rack rails—well, we'll not describe them. If you reach your destination without having your eyes knocked out entirely by flying cinders the size of walnuts congratulate yourself as being born for luck.

The travel was unusually heavy on this trip and the variety truly noticeable. For want of better occupation, we will look around and see who is who. Across the aisle is a boy with a dog in a basket, and on his coat sleeve a tag, reading, "Havana." Directly back of him is a young couple thoroughly engrossed in themselves, regardless of the fact that public places are the least suitable to "spoon" in, and at times they made themselves positively ludicrous.

"No doubt, a real bride and groom," snorted a fat Dutchman to his companion, who also watched the couple with keen interest.

"Yah! yah! much displayed contention," replied his companion.

"Och! you mean attention," corrected his friend. "Dot contention vill be round on de next trip if dings go not rightly right."

"Oh, yah! yah! dat was mine misdake on dat right vord in de wrong blace," and they both laughed so heartily all turned to look in the direction of the two Dutchmen, who apparently seemed the only ones aboard the train who found life worth the living.

A very young-looking woman with two children turned around so suddenly when the Dutchmen laughed aloud, that one of her chubby youngsters took a tumble out into the aisle, and for the next twenty minutes gave a free concert, much to the annoyance of the young mother.

Through all the commotion, Robert Nash nor the heavily veiled woman turned neither to the right nor left; they seemed thoroughly lost in thought.

It is not possible to describe the woman's face owing to the heavy veil. In stature she is rather tall, and would weigh possibly two hundred pounds.

Ah! she turns her head, and from beneath her veil there peeps a vivid red lock. More at present we cannot learn.

The young mother, with her two children, on their way to Cuba, had just opened a neat little basket containing a lunch. The children seemed hungry, hungry as children get when traveling, and from appearances they were enjoying the biscuits and jam, distributing a goodly share over their faces. Two little "pickaninnies" looked on with such eager longing that the mother responded to their looks by giving each a sandwich, which caused their eyes to dilate twice their natural size, and their pearly teeth to show like a white-washed fence on a moonlight night.

"Och! mine gracious!" exclaimed one of the Dutchmen, looking around and seeing the children eating.

"Och! Yacob, I nearly did forget mine 'abbetite.' I haf it in mine 'zatchel.' Just vait once." And, pulling out a huge old-fashioned carpet-bag from beneath the seat, the two began to dive into the contents unmindful of all else. There were pretzels, bologna, pickles, crackers and——

"Be jabers!" shouted an Irishman, who up to this time had been holding his nose and looking at every occupant in the sleeping car in disgust. He continued: "Whew! Open the windows and let some oxygen in!"

"Is there anything wrong?" inquired the conductor, on entering the car.

"Is there anything right about a car filled with germ fumes?" replied the Irishman. "The next thing I'll have the blasted microbe on me. It's a detriment to me health and constitution. I'll sue the railroad for carrying malignant odors. There's microbe miasma aboard this car, and plenty of it, or my name is not Denis!"

It was not necessary for the conductor to proceed far before learning the cause. The two Dutchmen, apparently ignorant of any disturbance, were enjoying with the keenest relish their lunch, in which was a goodly share of "Limburger" cheese. They did not see the conductor until he reached the seat they occupied. Looking up they were much surprised to see him holding his nose, as he informed them they would either have to throw that satchel and contents out of the window or eat their lunch in the woods at the next stopping place.

"You have got the car smelling so strong of that rotten cheese it will require a week to fumigate it."

"Bedad!" chimed in the Irishman, "put the dirty boogers out. They are not fit to travel with decent people."

"I will attend to this car, sir!" replied the conductor, waving the Irishman back to his seat.

"You will have to throw that cheese out of the window," continued the conductor, as he turned to leave the car.

"Yah, Fritz!" said Jacob, "ve haf got to trow dot cheese away."

"Vell," answered Jacob, "I vill haf to trow mine

self away, den, for mine cheese am already inside under mine vest."

"Ha, ha! Yah, mine too," replied Fritz. "Oh, vell, ve stop at de next blace once and get a glass of lager and more bretzels to vash dot goot cheese down out of sight and hearing."

"Yah! yah! ve do dot," replied his companion. "Ve haf blenty time. De train alvays stops long vile for to make repairs and get its breath."

"Jesup! Jesup!" shouted the brakeman. "All out for Jesup!"

The two pickaninnies, the Irishman, the veiled woman and another man got off. As the train pulled out the veiled woman and a man stood talking, deeply interested.

"What are you going to do?" inquired the man.

"Do!" exclaimed the woman, much excited, "why, you are going to get a place—a house to live in and support me, of course. What else do you think you are going to do?"

"Why, woman, I can't marry you!" responded the man; "I have got a wife and family!"

"What do I care about your wife and family? What did you care, even while I was nursing her with your last child?" exclaimed Mary McGinty, for she it was.

"You lived the double life right under her very eyes, yet she was too young and green to even suspect such a state of affairs. Now, do you think for a moment you are going to leave me on the world

in this condition? You will find, Bob Nash, I am not the easy, good-hearted mark she was!"

"Why, good gracious, woman! how can I marry you? I have got a wife and family," interrupted Bob Nash, much agitated.

"It doesn't make any difference to me about your cant's or cans," retorted the woman; "you are the father of my unborn child, and you will not only support me, but my child. So from now on, unless you want more trouble than you ever dreamed of, you may proceed to introduce me as your wife, and get to work making a living for me!"

"My God, woman! what do you mean?" exclaimed the man.

"I mean just what I say," retorted the woman.

With his head bowed in thought, Robert Nash saw no way of escape from this awful entanglement. He realized, perhaps, for the first time, that he was in this woman's clutches. If he defied her by returning to his wife and little ones, she would follow him and create such a disgraceful sensation that he never could reinstate himself again in that community, and would be compelled to leave anyway.

Robert Nash had not the courage to do right toward his wronged wife and children. He had sinned against them time and again, and he was too cowardly to return with such a grave and startling accusation against him. He finally decided there was no alternative but to let his helpless family drift as best they could and remain with this woman, in whose clutches he had blindly allowed himself to be ensnared.

Robert Nash never before concerned himself about any particular business. His father-in-law had a good home and plenty to eat, with "Welcome" stamped on everything. Why should he worry over such a small matter as supporting a family?

But now it was very different. The scenes had changed. Robert Nash awoke from his life of indolent ease, and realized he had cast his lot with one who knew how to drive every energy in him straight to the working notch.

"Come on!" commanded the woman; "we are not going to stand here forever."

Walking up to a small cottage, with a sign in the window, which read: "Board by the day or week," the woman said, "That is what we want." After ringing the bell and waiting fully five minutes, an old man came to the door.

"I am looking for board for myself and husband," quickly spoke the woman, as though she feared Robert Nash might be a little backward in coming forward and introducing her properly.

They remained in Jesup until the child was born; then, traveling farther south, they took up a land grant, where they tilled the soil until they claimed ownership.

Year after year a child was added to the family, which was now very large.

Robert Nash had not written to his people in all this time. It was now ten years since he took up his abode in Key West. Never once had he communicated or heard from his children. Whether living or dead he knew no more about them than the dead. A

longing came over him to hear from his home land.

Thinking he could write now with perfect safety, after all these years, he did so.

Making a general complaint of his hard lot with a large family to support and so little income for them, his father never failed to send him money when he wrote. But it had been so long since they had last heard from him. His sister received letters from home, inquiring about Robert, but she knew nothing about him, either. Her father and brother would often inquire as to what manner of country this was, since every time they heard from Robert he was having a hard time supporting his family.

His sister, who had not heard from her brother in years, was delighted to hear he was still in the land of the living, and immediately wrote him a letter. She received an affectionate reply, with an invitation to visit him.

Her joy knew no bounds. The very thought of once more seeing her brother was enough to thoroughly rejuvenate her entire being. She hastened to make preparations for her journey with the view of spending the winter South.

"Oh, how happy I will be to see Robert again! We will talk of old times and old friends, and the children and Jean. Oh, I can hardly wait for the steamer to sail!"

Thus would Christina's (Robert's sister) thoughts soar during the two weeks before she started.

The steamer was filled with Northern people seek-

ing the Southern climate as a relief from the winter's blast. Christina could think of nothing save the happiness awaiting her in her brother's home. Everybody aboard the steamer, from the captain down, knew her story.

"Oh, how slow the steamer sails!" she would tell the captain time and again, whereupon he would assure her he was running faster than usual for her special benefit.

It was dark when Christina arrived in Kew West, and, on learning her brother lived four miles away, she went to her hotel and remained over night, sending word to her brother that she had arrived.

All day, all night, and next day she waited patiently, but no brother came. He surely did not receive my message, thought Christina. Perhaps the children have the measles, and they are in quarantine. I will just hire a carriage and drive out and surprise them. Yes; that is what I will do. So stupid of me not to think of this at first! I am not afraid of measles.

Christina was up bright and early next morning, arranging with the proprietor for a vehicle of some description to take her two trunks and self, and no end of small packages and boxes containing presents for Robert, Jean and the children.

"Are the roads good?" inquired Christina of the boy driver as they started.

"Pretty fair, mum; but don't —— Wo! wo!" he exclaimed, as the wheel sank about three inches in mud.

"Now, mind, boy, where you go. Be careful about

such places," said Christina. "Keep your eyes open."

"Yes, mum," answered the boy. "The road commis ——"

"Oh, my! You clumsy driver! Why, don't you watch where you drive! Why didn't you see that big stone? Now, you watch!" said Christina, sternly.

"Well, mum, we've had a right smart rain lately, and it has left our roads a bit upside down fur strangers to see," answered the driver, making a brave effort to apologize for bad roads.

"Oh, my! What was that which ran over the road?" shouted Christina, as the horse shied to one side.

"Oh, that was nothing," answered the boy, "but an alligator, mum; they're as common as dirt around these parts. I hope yer ain't scared, fur yer liable to see ——"

"Oh, save me! There comes one along the fence! Drive fast, boy!" exclaimed Christina. "His mouth is large enough to swallow this horse, stage and contents. Oh, if I ever live to reach Robert's home! Poor Robert would never rest if he knew I, his beloved sister, was in such danger! What do they live on? Do they ever hurt anybody?" anxiously inquired Christina.

"Hurt anybody! Well, I should say so! And you had better ask: What don't they live on? Why, mum, they've been known to enter houses, devour the family, furniture—in fact, everything laying around loose—then leave, feeling so hungry they'd swallow the hitching post for dessert."

"Oh, goodness! My poor brother!" cried Christina,

wringing her hands. "Doomed to forever live in such a wild country. I will advise him to move at once."

"There's the house, mum," interrupted the driver, pointing his whip in the direction of a little one-story farm house, with its pine boards blistered almost black by the sun, the rosin glistening from every visible knot, and a ripple-shape mud chimney in the rear.

"I'll just take yer baggage in, and be off before feeding time," remarked the boy, driving the horse up to the old rickety-looking gate.

Lifting the baggage out, he left Christina to get out, or fall out, as best she could, then drove off without further comment.

Christina knocked at the door, which, by the way, rested against the door sill, instead of hanging on hinges, like other respectable doors. She waited for a few moments ere repeating the rap.

"Oh, my! If the house should be empty! or, may be that horrid-looking alligator we saw has devoured all."

Knocking again long and loud, brought a tall, fat, coarse-looking woman to the door. "What do you want?" she said.

"Is this Mr. Robert Nash's house?" inquired Christina, somewhat surprised at the woman's manner.

"Yes," replied the woman, coldly. "Come in! Are you selling things for a living?"

Walking in slowly, Christina thought: My, what a cool reception—only a cranky servant girl to meet me! Perhaps Robert, Jean and the children are away, and did not receive my letter. She thinks I am a peddler.

"Is Mr. Nash at home?" she ventured to inquire, as she seated herself near a window.

"Yes," again curtly replied the woman.

My! my! thought Christina. How can my brother put up with such an indifferent servant? "Are Jean and the children at home?" inquired Christina, seeing there was no sign of the other woman saying anything.

"I do not know whom you have reference to," she blankly replied, taking a chair and drawing it near the open door, where stood a little red-haired, freckle-faced girl, looking shyly at Christina.

"I mean Mrs. Nash—my brother's wife, of course!" said Christina.

"Mrs. Nash!" retorted the woman. "I am Mrs. Nash, if that is whom you mean."

"What! You my brother's wife? Never!" replied Christina. "Oh, no! no! Where is my brother, Jean and their children?" cried Christina, walking the floor. "Oh, my brother! my brother! Where is my brother?"

All day Christina waited patiently. But no brother came.

"Where is my brother?" she inquired of the woman, who seemed perfectly indifferent as to her presence.

"I guess you will find him out in the wagon-house now," she curtly replied.

Out to the wagon-house Christina went, the way being led by the little red-haired, freckle-faced girl.

"I will show you," she said. "Here is my papa!" cried the child, as they entered the door.

There her brother sat on a pile of wood, his head resting in his hands.

"My God, Robert! My brother! What has gone wrong in your life? Why didn't you write me about all this? Where is Jean and the children? My God, Robert! where are your children?" exclaimed Christina, thoroughly aroused.

She stayed one night, and raised such a disturbance in trying to find some news regarding Jean and her brother's children whom she had met on a previous visit. She could not be calmed. Next morning her brother took her to Tampa, where she boarded for a while. It was on this occasion that Robert Nash tried to offer some explanation regarding his much-tangled life, and how he unfortunately became entangled with the woman now claiming to be his wife.

Christina was almost heartbroken. What a different reception to what she had planned all the way down! She had told all her friends ere leaving home that she would perhaps never return, but make her permanent home with her dear brother, Jean and the children. Now all was changed. She must not return at any cost until spring. What would her friends think? She never could explain all this "mix up" to her friends, which seemed to her like a horrible nightmare. And to allow her brother to pay her expenses, with all that houseful of children to support and a troublesome woman to contend with, was too much. No, thought Christina, I will not allow him to spend one cent on me. She began to form business ideas independently.

"Anything to be independent of my brother."

She had some money, but preferred making more,

at least enough to pay her expenses while away. It seemed, with all the unfortunate circumstances surrounding her visit, the gods still smiled on her, for in the very cottage, where she boarded, the proprietor, a very delicate woman, was much in need of rest from her household duties. But where to find a trustworthy person—one she could entrust her house to without worrying how things were going on during her absence—seemed impossible.

Now was Christina's opportunity. She wished to be independent entirely of her brother, and Mrs. Patterson wished to be independent of all care for a while. After Christina talked with Mrs. Patterson, explaining her position and offering her services as general manager of the cottage, the bargain was sealed, and everyone liked Christina. Mrs. Patterson did not intend letting a good opportunity of this kind pass by.

After learning Christina was in full charge of the cottage, the boarders all expressed their satisfaction in many ways by making her duties as light as possible, thinking she had out of a kind heart volunteered to relieve Mrs. Patterson for a while.

Only once in a great while did Christina see her brother. They seemed to be drifting farther apart than ever.

The spring was advancing, and one by one the winter resorts became deserted, and the guests once more turned their faces northward and homeward. This had a tendency to make Christina homesick, and she decided to go with the crowd before it got too late.

I will go to see Robert once more before I leave, thought Christina. It may be the last time, and I would like to part in peace and friendship with my brother.

Robert Nash was always glad to see his sister; in fact, he would have liked to have seen her oftener. But fate had played such pranks in his life, the more he tried to rectify mistakes the worse they appeared.

Christina persisted in looking upon Mary McGinty as the servant girl, refusing to recognize her in any other light. Seated in a small room near a table, Christina and her brother were apparently lost in deep thought. Finally, Christina, realizing her time was limited, looked in her brother's face, remarking:

"Robert, wouldn't you like to see your children?"

"Yes! yes!" he responded in half-broken voice, never raising his head. "I cannot rest day or night, my dear sister."

Unfortunately Mary McGinty, presiding as Mrs. Nash, passed through the room just in time to overhear Robert Nash remark that he was miserable over not seeing his children. She instantly flew in a rage, fighting like a wild tigress. Both Robert and his sister, with the pure instinct that "blood is thicker than water," fought for the absent children until Robert Nash, knowing there was no alternative for him other than siding with the woman, into whose clutches he had fallen, and who was the mother of his eight children there, turned and ordered his sister from the house. This act so completely surprised Christina, she stood speechless for a few moments.

"O Robert!" she cried, passing out of the room, "I will go, but remember, boy, your punishment is coming and will be greater than you can bear. The innocent voice of your children, adrift in the world, are crying out to God for revenge against you, and He will not forget their cause. It shall be written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond upon some heart in a language so strong that the voice will cry out for justice until their wrongs are righted. Remember, my brother, revenge will be theirs. Their voice is ringing in your ear night and day. That is why, my poor brother, you cannot sleep or rest. No; you will never rest again, for the 'wages of sin is death.' O my poor blind brother! You did not know the way of the transgressor was so hard. Good-bye! good-bye!" sobbed Christina as she passed out of the gate. She was too much overcome to ask her brother to drive her to the little country station, four miles away, but, heartbroken, plodded her way along the dusty road alone. Indeed, so preoccupied was her mind she forgot about the alligators she had seen on her first trip and the story the driver told regarding their marvelous appetite. Her whole mind was absorbed in thought regarding the hapless condition in which she found her brother, and the absent wife and children—the only wife Christina could make up her mind to believe her brother was rightfully entitled to.

CHAPTER XVII.

JEAN HEARS IMPORTANT NEWS.

WHEN Christina reached her home in the North, and related her remarkable experience to her nephew he was much enraged. And, knowing where Jean was, he wrote, inquiring if she had any idea where her husband, Robert Nash, was. In reply Jean stated she knew nothing about him, nor had she heard from him in ten years.

"If I knew," she wrote, "I would see if he could not do something for his children."

In another letter Jean received the startling news already related by Christina. Jean, thinking Robert Nash ought to be made to feel some of the responsibility of his children regarding their education, at once consulted her lawyer, and he advised her, by all means, to urge upon their father the great importance of the children having educational advantages. Jean at once communicated this intelligence to Robert Nash. In reply he stated that he could do nothing for her or her children, as he had a large family to support.

Jean immediately sought her lawyer's advice upon the receipt of this letter. After reading its contents Lawyer Osborn laughed heartily.

"Ah! A noble father, indeed! Can do nothing for his own lawful children, since a houseful of 'illegitimates' claim his attention. Hum! I will just frame

a letter to suit his case, at the same time gently impress upon his mind a few little points in law he has most undoubtedly overlooked."

"Robert Nash, Esq.:

"Sir—I am in receipt of a letter from you, dated July ——, addressed to your legal wife, Mrs. Jean Nash. After ten years of silence, in which she has never received a line from you, neither received an ounce of support for herself or children from you, her legal husband and father of her children, I must remind you that since no divorce was obtained on either side, you are still the legal husband of Jean Nash, until released by the law. That is a knot you will learn, if you do not already know, cannot be untied at will outside of the United States courts. I must impress you also with the fact that your own letter before me proclaims you a bigamist, and, of course, you understand we have strenuous laws regarding same this side of Utah. I think Mrs. Nash's request regarding your shouldering some of the responsibilities of educating your legal children, especially since she has cared for them alone up to the present time, but a just one. Still, with all its justice, you absolutely refuse this small and lenient request by an insulting letter to the effect that you cannot do anything for your legal children, having a large family there to support. With a legal wife here, what right or claim has another woman or her children on you? None! as you were never divorced, sir! Any other marriage is void. Not only does this act proclaim you a bigamist, but you

have inflicted the stigma of no name upon the hapless heads of those unfortunate little children around you, who came not of their own will, but by the sin of your transgression. Your children by legal marriage are standing at the bar of justice, crying out to the law which sealed their right to claim your name honorably. They must, and will, ever receive the full protection of that law which legalized their rights at birth. These children, sir, must be educated! What are you going to do?

"Awaiting your reply in this matter,

"I remain,

"Lafayette Osborn, Attorney."

If Robert Nash ever in his life felt indignant, the letter Mrs. Nash next received did not indicate such. In the most pleading humility he begged her to be lenient with him, and not press the charge of bigamy against him. His family was large; his health poor; his purse empty. In fact, he could not do much to help himself. But if she would send the children to him he would try in some way to do for them and give them an education. "But, oh! don't send me to prison. I am used to the open air, and such close, confined quarters and the poor fare would kill me."

Jean could not bear the thought of her children seeing their father sent to prison. That was revolting in itself. If left to her own decision, she preferred letting "bygones be bygones," sweeping the past into oblivion. But her children—they must be protected. She sought her lawyer, and he, wise sage, advised

immediate action on her part in pressing charges and taking everything from him—property, money, anything; she had first claim.

"Oh, I cannot do that!" replied Jean.

"Did he care whether you or his children lived or starved all these years?" retorted Lawyer Osborn, much excited. "Remember, in winter's cold and summer's heat you have had to bear the burden alone of maintaining yourself and his children."

"Oh, they were my children, too, Lawyer Osborn!" replied Jean. "And if the burden was hard at times it was the labor of love."

"Well, Mrs. Nash, for your sake I trust it will not prove 'love's labor lost.' But I am inclined to believe that Robert Nash is foxy. He knows your good heart of old, and to arouse your sympathy he is mustering up all the ills that flesh is heir to. I say press your charge; punish the rascal!" said Lawyer Osborn.

"Oh, I cannot, Lawyer Osborn! If he will only help his children and give them an education, I will get a divorce and say no more," replied Jean.

"Madam, pardon me!" interrupted Lawyer Osborn, with much dignity, "remember, in after years you will realize it is best to let the world know the truth in the start. It saves many embarrassing explanations later. But just as you say. The law is on your side, and I am here to serve you in my profession to the best advantage. I simply point out these facts for your benefit. You get a divorce! That cuts you out of property, should he possess anything."

"I will get a divorce," quickly replied Jean. "Not

get a divorce from a man after all I know! Why, I would surely think I was one of the discarded nonentities of Utah! Yes, indeed, I will get a divorce! But he must educate his children."

"Very well, Mrs. Nash. I will write him to that effect."

"Robert Nash, Esq.:

"Sir—Mrs. Nash, while having full authority by law, as your legal wife, to punish you as a bigamist, has rather preferred getting a divorce. She will keep and educate one child, the little girl, but you must educate the boys, giving them equally good advantages, otherwise she must punish you as you deserve.

"Awaiting your reply, I remain,

"Lafayette Osborn, Attorney."

Mrs. Nash received the following reply a few days later:

"Dear Wife and Children—I will take all the children if you will send them here at your expense. Will try to give them all advantages. Don't be too hard on me! I will help them. I made my will, and all will share alike——."

So Mrs. Nash sent the boys to their father. The girl was placed in school.

Imagine the consternation and surprise among the neighbors when these children arrived! Robert Nash was looked up to by his townspeople as an honorable citizen. No mention had ever been made regarding another set of children and the deserted wife. He

wrote Lawyer Osborn that the sending of those children to him had disgraced him forever. He would never be able to answer the thousand and one questions put to him each day by his neighbors and other citizens.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Lafayette Osborn. "Run off with another woman, leaving an honorable wife and family. Ha! ha! He ought to be disgraced worse than that. Posing in a community as respectable with a houseful of illegitimate children. Hum! No disgrace attached to that!"

Ralph was too large, they considered, to send to school. He must have other advantages, such as work, to bring in money to help support the large family. Armond was not so large, but made a good "chore" boy when home from school. So between this, that and the other excuse he did not see inside of a schoolroom very often. At fifteen he was put on the railroad to work. Another monthly check, though small, helped where the family was large. Ralph had traveled around considerably with his mother, met intelligent people, therefore could not feel at home among such degrading illiteracy, satisfied with a half-way lazy existence. After six months or less Ralph ran away, never communicating with any relative.

Edna, now a bright girl of fourteen, was spending the winter in Washington with friends.

Robert Nash was entitled to a pension, but never received one. He wrote the following note to Edna:

"My dear Daughter—If you will go and see about my pension and work it up so I can get it, I will

give you that watch I have promised so long. Times are hard, and my family is large. I need my pension to help me out. And tell your mother Ralph ran away before I could give him all the advantages I promised; and Armond needs new shoes, so he can go on with his schooling and advantages ——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Lawyer Osborn when Mrs. Nash gave him this letter. "Charming, indeed!" he remarked. "His family is large. Ha! ha! Your child can exert herself and spend her money looking up a pension to help that crowd, and receive for her labor a watch, which she could buy herself with the money spent running around looking up pension claims and lawyers. He seems a little dull of comprehension on the subject of lawyers. They are in the business for money. If he can send Edna a few hundred dollars to pay expenses, let her proceed, otherwise instruct her to drop the subject. And your boy cannot go to school unless you send him clothes and shoes. Ha! ha! The nerve of that man surpasseth my understanding. His nerves are all right. I see why he made a good soldier. He had nerve enough to be shot through a cannon and come out alive. Edna can look up the pension under these conditions, namely, that you receive half each month for your trouble and the years he gave you nothing."

Edna had not sufficient evidence or knowledge of the doctor's whereabouts who had attended her father. She wrote to her aunt Christina about the matter, thinking they would know something about her father at that time, and was confronted with the startling

news from the nephew that neither he nor his aunt would give any information whatever. Thus the subject dropped until later on when the Pension Bureau took the matter up, after Robert Nash's death, in which case, with all the information and facts rendered, Edna learned, three years after her father's death, the woman living with Robert Nash and assuming to be his legal wife, not only succeeded in drawing the pension, but, having married again, was still defrauding the Government by continuing to draw the pension, and would, no doubt, continue doing so had not Edna gone straight to the Pension Bureau and reported the matter. The agent, having all facts and knowledge of the case previous, was much astonished to learn the woman had succeeded in getting a pension when it had been proved beyond a doubt that Robert Nash died leaving no widow. Mrs. Jean Nash had received a divorce under circumstances already mentioned, and the second claimed marriage, if there ever was one, was void since Robert Nash was not free from the first wife at the time.

"Well, I will tell you more startling news than that," remarked Edna in her outspoken, girlish fashion. "She not only succeeded in getting the pension, sir, but married again, and is still drawing a pension as Robert Nash's widow. She never was his wife, therefore never could be his widow."

And here ended the double life of one around whom, when the last call was sounded, his friends gathered, all unmindful of the tarnished record he left behind as a heritage to his children. But it was the last

"taps," and over their erring brother the Masons breathed a last farewell, as one by one they filed in and bore his remains back to Mother Earth, while the drum slowly beat:

> Solemn strikes the vesper bell,
> Notes of our departing time.

Armond, a boy now sixteen, felt after his father's death there was nothing for him to gain by remaining in this forsaken hamlet. But how could he leave? There were debts innumerable which his father had left. Who was to meet them? Armond felt he was the oldest, and, despite his father's faults, it was his duty to clear his name of debt. Armond knew not when he would ever accomplish the task, but he started with a manly will to do his very best, and his fellow citizens, recognizing his honest intentions, helped wherever they could by throwing business in his way; though, to be sure, opportunities in this small out-of-the-way place were very meagre. Scarcely a week passed without someone handing Armond a bill against his father. Two long years passed, and Armond felt he had about finished paying all debts, besides supporting the family. He decided to leave for more prosperous quarters, instead of remaining all his life supporting the woman and her nine children his father left. With the debts all paid they were left on a better footing now to help themselves.

After receiving a letter from near relatives, Armond decided to go to them until better opportunities presented themselves. He arrived at their home one Sun-

day morning. Imagine their surprise to see Armond, thin and worn, clad in a shabby suit of "gens." The poor boy had worked night and day to clear his father's name and support the family.

"Why, Armond, have you no clothes?" inquired his cousin. "No trunk with you?"

"Only what you see on me," replied Armond. "I could not pay bills and buy clothes, too. So of the two evils, I preferred shabby clothes. But I hope to do better soon."

"O Armond, dear! if you had only written to me, boy, you never would have remained there working so hard for those people, endangering your health. I will buy you some clothing as soon as the stores open to-morrow, and see what we can do for you. Of course your being out of school now will help a great deal in getting you a position."

"Why, cousin, I never went to school but two weeks all the time I was in Key West. I had to help father make money to support his family! That is why Ralph ran away. So now," said Armond, "as far as schooling goes, I am completely handicapped; hardly able to write my name."

But Armond had energy, ambition and youth that yearns for better things. And with all the drawbacks which had confronted him he was anxious to show his relatives their kindness was appreciated by him. He applied to one of the large stores for work of any kind. Having nothing better in view, the proprietor started him running the elevator until he could learn just where to place him. It was in Armond to rise

above this position, if possible. The proprietor recognized this ambition, and liked it. In fact, he watched Armond for several days, unknown to anyone. There was something characteristic about the boy he liked. Within two weeks his position was changed to something better, which enabled him to attend night school and gain a little more headway in schooling. Thus from one position to another, Armond rose to better things, as well as in the estimation of his employers. Unfortunately his, which was giving promise of such a bright career, was cut off by an illness which proved fatal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEAN AND WINSTON RAND DRIFT APART.

BOTH Winston Rand and Jean possessed the happy faculty of looking on the bright side of life. So, with a strong determination to rise out of the mist and clouds of the recent episode they had encountered, they established themselves in spacious quarters, owned a fine team, which sped the avenue each day, ofttimes resulting in having to forfeit five dollars for exceeding the speed limit.

Winston Rand and Jean were now both free to marry. They decided if they remained in business together, it was best to marry, which they did. Everything loomed up prosperous again. But another dark cloud appeared. Winston Rand felt his inferiority of education seemingly more after marriage than before. At least it was evident something annoyed him greatly. He could not stand prosperity. He took to drinking. Little by little it grew on him, until at times he became like a roaring lion. He hated the very sight of Jean's children. Ralph had not been heard of since leaving his father. No one knew whether he was living or dead. When a boy passed the house, bearing any resemblance at all to Ralph, Jean would quickly dispatch someone, or go herself to make sure it wasn't Ralph. Winston Rand could not bear this devotion on the mother's part toward her children, especially an absent one, who was, as Winston Rand claimed, big enough to care for himself.

On such occasions Winston Rand would rush off, get staving drunk, return home, and try his hand at making kindling wood out of the furniture, or move the "sulky" and barn stuff up into the bath-room, declaring that was the proper place for his property; and there it would have to remain. When sobered up he was amazed to see the bath-room thus furnished, inquiring with all the authority possible, "What d—— fool brought my 'sulky' upstairs?" On other occasions he would purchase two tickets for the trip up the lakes, come driving like a wild man in a hired cab about a half hour before the boat started, order Mrs. Rand to pack the little steamer trunk in a jiffy and accompany him. The trunk was hurriedly packed, the driver placed it on the cab, and when Mrs. Rand stepped inside, and all was supposed to be in readiness to start, Winston Rand mounted the driver's seat and gave the trunk a powerful kick that sent its contents flying all over the sidewalk, ordered Mrs. Rand out, drove off himself and remained two or three days at a time, then returned sheepishly, imploring forgiveness, declaring this was the last time he ever would get drunk. But alas! drunkards' promises are like pie crust, they are easily broken.

Time and again he repeated these "sprees," each time growing worse and doing something so unheard of that the neighbors did not know really what would get into the man's brain next. When sober he was kind, goodhearted and splendid company; paid his way promptly. Everybody liked him, and, unfortunately, every man, woman and child for blocks around

knew him through the manner in which he advertised himself when drinking. He was drunk and didn't care who knew it.

A servant rarely remained longer than a month, as it was no unusual thing for Winston Rand to enter the dining room when everything was prepared and on the table ready for the family to sit down and enjoy the meal—entering, apparently, as meek as a lamb, taking his place at the head of the table, and, without warning or apology, raising his foot and kicking the table over, breaking everything thereon. When sobered up next day he would march down to the china store and purchase the finest set of china in the place, regardless of the fact that it was just as liable as not to meet the same fate. It mattered not how expensive the article, if drink had the upper hand and he felt in a mood to break something it had to be broken, and was generally smashed to smithers in the twinkling of an eye. If Mrs. Rand wore a dress he did not fancy, it mattered not how much she cared for it, he would simply tear it off her back; then feeling so foolish next day over his conduct he would go downtown when sober and buy her a dress of the most expensive material—black silk, or whatever took his fancy at the time. As for hats, if Mrs. Rand owned one not to his liking, it was nothing to see Winston Rand hang them on a tree in the backyard and shoot at them as target. Anything cheap looking coming under his observation while intoxicated was doomed. If he ever thought of economy when sober,

while drinking his imagination ran into the wildest extravagance.

At last Mrs. Rand's patience gave out. She had forgiven so often, only to see him grow worse each time, until Lawyer Osborn told her one day her efforts were useless. The timber wasn't in the man to make the ideal man she pictured.

"Mrs. Rand, patience ceases to be a virtue sometimes," said Lafayette Osborn. "If he insists on running after the bottle you had best let him run. Drink is making him worse each time."

Taking her lawyer's advice, she was just preparing to leave town when Winston Rand appeared, all out of breath, imploring her to give him just one more chance, and take him with her wherever she went. Deeply moved, Mrs. Rand hardly knew what to do. There was no time now to consult Lawyer Osborn, or anyone else. She must decide herself.

"Just one more trial!" pleaded Winston Rand. "Edna, dear," he exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Rand's daughter, who stood motionless awaiting her mother's decision, "ask mamma to forgive me once more."

"I cannot ask her that," replied Edna. "You have caused mamma so much unhappiness; she must decide for herself. She knows what Lawyer Osborn advised."

Mrs. Rand arose and started for the train as the gates swung open. Edna followed. Winston Rand had drunk up all his available cash, otherwise he might have acted more independently. However, he boarded the train without money or ticket, and pleaded until Mrs. Rand gave him money to pay his fare.

When they reached their destination, Winston Rand —unfortunate man—forgot his promise and good resolutions the moment he spied a "grog" shop. Whereupon Mrs. Rand and Edna departed to another city, without informing him regarding their future intentions.

After finding a reconciliation was impossible, Winston Rand drifted from bad to worse until he died as he had lived—his own worst enemy.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLARA LANGLEY MEETS RALSTON NEWBANKS.

When breezes softly blow
  Across the bay at night,
And distant lights like stars beam low,
  I listen to the echo of the waves
Splash on the silvery sand so bright.

I listen to the splash of oar,
  As gently, o'er the waters blue,
Some fisherman, or tardy swain, returns,
  Relating daring ventures true.

Ah! too, I listen for the tread of feet,
  That glided in and out at will;
The voices sweet and low I ne'er may greet;
  The faces, I'll remember still.

BEFORE the day set for the "Langley versus Barnie" trial Barnie declared it was useless to bring up the case, as he positively would not break the silence he already maintained, in which his lips were sealed forever. He had no desire to bring the young lady into further notoriety. Depositing one hundred thousand dollars in the Shelbourne Bank to her credit, Carlton Barnie vanished out of sight. Detectives searched far and wide, but not a trace could be found of the man who only a few days ago walked through Shelbourne as though nothing had occurred to disturb his peace of mind. Even at his mines and in his office nothing had been heard from him for several weeks; in fact, the last news his manager received

was that he would shortly visit his old home accompanied by his bride.

Clara Langley, still a beautiful woman—in fact, the sorrow she had undergone recently put a feeling and expression in her great brown eyes never there before, enhancing her beauty and making her more charming than ever; still she denied herself all intercourse with the outer world.

It was again summer. Clara's mother having died during the winter, she was now, indeed, alone. Seeking a rest and change of scene, she went to the little village of Coden, on the coast borders of Alabama. Here she could recuperate and still find enough amusement to divert her mind and keep things from growing too monotonous. If there was any one particular characteristic about Clara Langley at all, it was regularity and order. She had acquired this while at boarding school, and could not well shake it off now. At 5 a. m. she was up and down on the beach enjoying her bath. After breakfast she enjoyed a drive, when not out sailing or fishing. Not infrequently she would rise at 4 a. m. to join a fishing party for the day.

The walks and beautiful drives along the shell road and bayou, with its many curves and bends, its banks edged with grand old trees, whose moss-laden branches touch the cooling water; the tall, majestic pines swaying to and fro as though peeping at their own shadow reflected in the bay. All this touched Clara Langley's heart, drawing her nearer to nature, nearer to God. She had only though of life as a great

social whirl-about, where each vied with the other for social supremacy. The natural charm of this little rustic village taught her that life was deeper and contained grander and nobler themes than her imagination had ever pictured.

Built up in health and spirit, Clara sailed on the *Umbria* for Europe to visit friends in a small town in the south of France. She had been there but three weeks when, to her utter astonishment, while out driving one afternoon, she accidentally met a gentleman driving in an opposite direction with a party of friends. Bringing his horses to a sudden halt on the highway and raising his hat, with a gesture to Clara to stop a moment, he hastily inquired regarding her stay in France, and if he might be permitted to call, since he already had the pleasure of knowing her hostess and family.

As we have previously stated, Clara denied herself all company. Next morning's post brought a letter for Clara from her old friend Ralston Newbanks, for he it was who had met her while out driving. The evening post brought a letter from his mother sojourning in Paris awhile, entreating Clara to spend a fortnight with her, as she was wearied with strange faces and voices, and longed to greet one from her own native land and home.

Clara had learned to love Mrs. Newbanks' genial company at home, and she insisted so often on her coming that Clara could not refrain from accepting the invitation, especially since she and Ralston had become good friends again, and he was such an ardent wooer.

Not once was the name of Barnie mentioned by either party. Ralston found the hours more agreeable and bright in Paris since Clara arrived than before. And Clara now not only believed Ralston really loved her, but knew her own heart was leaning strongly in his direction. All this she would acknowledge to herself in moments of reflective meditation. But not for the world must she allow Ralston to read the truth too soon. Clara was thoroughly at home with the whip. It was her delight to be out for an early drive at dawn along the fine country roads, returning in time for breakfast.

It was a beautiful evening in June; the fire-fly was flitting hither and thither as she and Ralston drove along the river banks. In silence they neared the large, spacious grounds of an ancient monastery long since closed to the tread of feet and sound of voice. Beautifully situated where waters gently ripple and flow into the river Rhone, some distance from Avignon, Clara broke the silence, as thoughtfully she tapped the dashboard with her whip. What a subject for vast thought! Where are the builders? Where are they who enlivened the interior with their beautiful lives of devotion?

"Yes," responded Ralston; "if walls could only speak! Do you believe a life could be called beautiful behind such gloomy walls? They have every appearance of being haunted."

"Why, yes; I believe so," quickly responded Clara. "The sacrifice at first of giving up the outer world

might seem hard. But I believe I myself would enjoy the peaceful calm therein."

"Oh, do not say that!" quickly interrupted Ralston. "We will change the subject; the thought is distressing. Let us turn out of this road and leave these haunted-looking walls behind to the unhappy spirits, who knew not the joys of living."

"Certainly! As you wish," replied Clara, "if they are so distasteful to you."

Driving a short distance, they came to a small bridge leading across the river.

"Ah! at last!" cried Ralston. "We will cross here, ere the old monastery continues to follow us like a phantom of the past."

By an inland road they drove home through avenues of beautiful trees along the mountain side. Here Ralston repeated his love of the past, and begged to be acknowledged Clara's chosen suitor.

"You know without a doubt, Clara, darling, that I love you. Yes, thrice as much as in the golden days that have sped us by. Dear one, do not let time crowd out all our happiness. You alone can make me the happiest of men. I am not worthy of your love, I know. But believe me, Clara, dear, my life will be a flame of devotion to you. Your very wish shall be gratified."

Clara remained silent, as they drove leisurely through a most picturesque spot along the mountain, overlooking a small village, where the river curved in and out in snake-like fashion. Looking into her face, Ralston remarked, "Silence gives consent."

After a moment's pause Clara answered, *"Oui."*

The birds, the shrubs and trees caught up the note, and, nodding their heads in approval, answered *"Oui! oui!"* as they witnessed the kiss that sealed the promise she gave to be his bride.

All was excitement in the Newbanks villa. Stately Miss Langley was the belle of the hour. It had been one continual round of pleasure since her arrival, and the young men openly avowed they would have considered it fairer play had the mention of an "engagement" been deferred until they had had an opportunity of meeting Miss Langley.

All was in preparation for the grand ball in honor of Ralston's beautiful American fiancee. The grand dinner the evening previous was the topic of conversation. But the ball promised to eclipse everything. Never were decorations more elaborate. Everything, from the crystal tower on the lawn, one hundred and fifty feet high, was illuminated by ten thousand bulbs of every hue imaginable, down to the most minute detail. Everything glittered in splendor. Electric bulbs, shaded like the rainbow into the most delicate, changing hues, encircled the villa from lawn to dome. Four fountains, also decked in changing hues, threw out their cooling breezes from sparkling waters of innumerable colors.

Ah, the guests are coming! And the gowns, marvels of beauty! Who'll describe them as they merit, or say this one is more beautiful than another? The splendor is too dazzling for my feeble sight. Let it be another's task to judge which should win the prize.

Miss Langley! Where is she? Ah! here comes Miss Rosebud Longworth! Surely the queen of the night, in sea-shell pink, an old flame of Ralston Newbanks. Will he find it possible to resist such beauty for his American blonde? See! She is ablaze with diamonds, from the tiara on her head to the glittering butterfly on her dainty little slippers. Was ever queen more beautiful? Jet black hair, and eyes that sparkled like a sunbeam in a drop of dew. Her rich satin gown, an exclusive "Worth" creation, was draped in graceful folds, festooned here and there with huge clusters of diamonds and lace. Ah! her companion, Count Erb ——. But who is this coming? All heads are peering in that direction. And a suppressed "Ah!" is heard as stately Miss Langley enters the room with Ralston, tall and erect as a princely pine in her native State, her handsome form in the most exquisite gown of cream lace in princess style; a diamond necklace and girdle complete the decoration. In her beautiful blond hair glistens a dainty diamond rose, as with the fresh dew of morning. As her color heightens beneath a superb complexion and sparkling brown eyes you think of the dainty Dresden china.

Rosebud Longworth was an acknowledged English beauty, who was made more renowned by her first season in Paris by the great German artist in his painting, "Visions of Paradise," accepted by the Exhibition of Fine Arts in Paris.

But Miss Langley, the new star in the social firmament of gay Paris, had eclipsed Miss Longworth in

beauty. Now she glided in and out of the grand march, a dream of grace and loveliness. As the march ended each vied with the other to write his name on the "American beauty's" card.

While chatting with friends the music started up for the third dance. Lord Esterway stepped up and claimed Miss Langley as his partner for the dance. Away they glided, whirling in and about, passing and repassing Rosebud Longworth and Ralston Newbanks. Whirling in and out among the mazy throng, they disappeared, and Clara and her partner did not see them during the remainder of the evening until, as the music died away, Lord Esterway was escorting Miss Langley to the palm garden. As they stepped upon the veranda he turned to assist Miss Langley with her wrap, when she suddenly caught sight of a male figure on bended knee before the beautiful Miss Longworth. Turning instantly to retrace her steps, she reeled, and would have sunk to the floor in a swoon had not Lord Esterway quickly caught her in his arms. The jar instantly revived her sufficiently to mutter, "Not a word, not a word, please!" gently placing one small hand over his mouth, as though fearing he would call for help. "The air! Take me out in the air, please!" He gently led her through another door, out beneath the shade trees to a rustic seat, where Clara sank down, as though exhausted, begging to remain a few moments quiet.

"I fear you danced too long, Miss Langley," said her partner. "The ball-room is poorly ventilated. I regret I did not notice your discomfort earlier!"

"Oh, not at all!" cried Clara. "I enjoyed the dance. I will be all right presently, thank you! The room was very warm."

"Really, Miss Langley, you looked so well and charming I cannot quite understand the sudden change," remarked Lord Esterway. "Allow me to bring you some refreshment!"

"Oh, no, thank you!" quickly spoke Clara. "And still, upon second consideration, you may. A glass of pale wine will do."

He turned to give the order to a page just crossing the lawn. Clara, left alone, exclaimed:

"Oh, how could he do it? And I, poor, foolish woman, considered him, of all others, so true and honorable! My brain fairly reels. I dare not think. At Madame Launde's reception I forgave him. Now again, the same offense. Oh, I cannot, even now, believe my own eyes! Can it really be there are no men truly honorable, if not for love, for honor's sake alone? The thought is maddening! Denmark—Denmark is rotten!"

Lord Esterway advanced as the last sentence died away from Clara's lips. She dank the wine, and after a few moments declared she felt much better, and would return, if he would kindly escort her around to the east portico, where she could enter without being detected by other guests loitering around.

"Yes; I will do so with pleasure, my dear Miss Langley. But Mrs. Newbanks and the guests will inquire regarding your absence," said Lord Esterway. "And, knowing your last dance was with me they will

direct their attention to me for an answer. I will send Mrs. Newbanks to you at once."

"Oh, no! I beg of you, please not!" cried Clara. "Simply say I grew faint and retired for a few moments."

"As you will," replied her partner, and returned to the palm room. But his mind was not at ease on the subject of remaining quiet. From a small alcove balcony, looking down upon the merry dancers, he peered long and earnestly, as though in search of someone in particular. She cannot be there, he repeated to himself after one hour's patient waiting. The dance has begun; perhaps I will find her in the throng. After patiently waiting a few moments, he turned again toward the palm room when, just as he stepped out on the veranda, he came face to face with Mrs. Newbanks in conversation with Prince Rudolph.

"Ah, Mrs. Newbanks, and honored sir! pardon my intrusion. I have sought this lady for two hours. Allow me just a moment, please!" said Lord Esterway.

"With pleasure," replied Mrs. Newbanks, bowing an apology to the prince, and leaving him in company with Lady Grey. "Nothing serious, I trust, my lord! You appear very pale," remarked Mrs. Newbanks, anxiously, as he led her in the blue drawing room apart from other guests.

"I hope not," replied Lord Esterway, as he informed her of Miss Langley's sudden indisposition, knowing no other cause than an over-heated ball-room.

Mrs. Newbanks did not tarry long after learning this news. It had already been two hours or more.

Hurrying herself to Miss Langley's room, she tapped lightly, then louder, on the door. Receiving no response, she entered, calling, "Clara, dear! Clara, are you ill, darling?" Hastily turning on the light, thinking the child had fallen asleep or fainted, after a few moments' search Mrs. Newbanks was amazed to find the room empty.

"Oh, where can the dear child be?" exclaimed Mrs. Newbanks, growing alarmed. "Marie!" calling the maid, "where is Miss Langley? Have you seen her?"

"*Oui,* madame, ze Mlle. come back maybe to-morrow!"

"What! Miss Langley gone? Where?" cried Mrs. Newbanks. "Tell my son to come to me at once," continued Mrs. Newbanks, much agitated.

"*Oui,* madame!" replied Marie.

When Ralston reached the room he found his mother on the verge of a nervous collapse.

"Are you ill, mother?" he cried, rushing to her side.

"No, my son! Is there any trouble between you and Clara? She is gone," nervously cried his mother.

"Gone!" exclaimed Ralston, sinking in a chair near his mother. "Impossible! You are surely mistaken, mother. Why should Clara leave in such a manner? She has been kidnapped by Carlton Barnie!" exclaimed Ralston, jumping up and pacing the floor. "Marie!" he cried, as the maid entered the room, "you say Miss Langley has left? Did she leave no message? Why didn't you notify someone ere this? No doubt some of your careless insolence has offended Miss Langley."

"Impossible, *mon cher Monsieur!*" replied Marie.

"Ze Mlle. not say she go until ze moment she leave ze boudoir."

The guests were informed of Miss Langley's sudden disappearance, and wild excitement ensued.

"She has been kidnapped!" cried Mrs. Newbanks. "Never would Clara leave me thus!"

A thorough search was made around the place, but no Clara could be found. Some of the male guests formed a party and started down the main road with huge torches, followed by Lady Grey, Mrs. Newbanks and Miss Longworth in all their ball-room finery, each suggesting a possible way of trapping the kidnapper. As the little party neared the river at the cross roads and were about to cross the bridge, Lady Grey stumbled over something in the road. As Mrs. Newbanks turned to assist her, the light from their torch fell on what Mrs. Newbanks at once recognized as Clara's skirt and white scarf.

"It is Clara's!" she screamed, falling in a dead faint.

This brought the entire party together. Lord Esterway and Ralston carried Mrs. Newbanks back to the villa, while the remaining party continued the search in the hope of finding Clara.

"Oh, she is drowned!" cried Lady Grey.

"Yes," responded Prince Rudolph. "I fear the worst now."

All decided to return and continue the search at daybreak, and have the river dredged, as a last resort. Most of the guests departed. Nothing profitable was gained by the following day's search. Mrs. Newbanks and Ralston waited three days, but no tidings came of

Clara, or any message regarding her belongings, including every diamond Ralston had given her. There they lay in the handsome gold jewel case, sparkling just as brilliantly as the night he presented them to Clara, but now reflecting no intelligence to his mind of his missing bride-elect.

Mrs. Newbanks closed her villa, going to London, where she and Ralston engaged detectives to find Miss Langley, if possible. But not a trace or clue could be gained, the detectives claiming their services were sought too late.

The handsome American beauty, seen only a short time ago on the Boulevard and in the busy mart, making purchases for her approaching wedding, was gone. Now all was changed, leaving the Newbanks perfectly blank.

CHAPTER XX.

BACK TO AMERICA.

WHEN Clara left Lord Esterway in the main corridor, she sought her own private room. Marie, the French maid, who had learned to love Miss Langley, entreated her many times to take her as private maid when she and Monsieur Ralston married. Marie was alone in the hall as Clara ascended the broad stairs.

"Can I assist ze Mlle.?" she hastily inquired as Clara entered her room.

"Yes, Marie! Follow me!"

When the door closed, Clara addressed the maid:

"Now, Marie, can I trust you?"

"*Oui,* Mlle., *oui!*" answered Marie.

"Well," remarked Clara, "have you a plain—very plain dark dress—you will lend me? It must be very plain."

After a moment's pause Marie exclaimed:

"*Oui,* Mlle. I give you one I have."

"Go, bring it to me at once!" commanded Clara. "Allow no one to see you! Quick, now!"

"Here, Mlle.!" replied Marie, as she returned, all out of breath, and overjoyed to think of being of service to beautiful Miss Langley.

"This, Mlle., a dark-green dress; my very best; me never wear yet. Will ze Mlle. like it?"

"Oh, yes! yes, Marie! that is fine; the very thing," hastily replied Clara, handing Marie a sealed

envelope, with instructions not to open it for two hours.

"I may return to-morrow. But, remember, Marie, I have your word of honor that you can be trusted. Tell no one of the color of my dress. Good-bye, my worthy maid! Good-bye!" repeated Clara Langley, as she slipped out of the door and into the night by the east driveway, unused by the public.

Clara had carefully dressed in Marie's green dress, then slipped one of her own walking skirts and short jackets over same, with a soft, felt hat tucked under her arm, wearing a scarf thrown over her head while leaving the house.

Marie could not imagine what Miss Langley had done with her green dress since she wore one of her own away. After carefully searching the room, Marie remained puzzled. No trace of the green dress could be found; "and ze Mlle. carry no bundle." But her lips were sealed tight, for already she had opened the envelope and discovered fifty dollars.

When Clara had walked some distance, she stepped out of the main road a moment. Taking off her own walking skirt and jacket, and donning a black wig she had used at masque balls at home, and the soft, felt hat, it would have been hard for anyone to recognize her as she proceeded on her way toward the little railway station. After purchasing her ticket she retired to the ladies' waiting-room until the train arrived. On reaching Baden Baden, Clara purchased another ticket to Berlin. On arriving there, she took a carriage to a small village, five miles out, where she

rested a few weeks unmolested. She knew if the Newbanks made any attempt to search for her at all their attention would be directed toward out-going steamers, or to London, where they knew she had many friends, who would gladly offer her aid in secluding herself. Feeling quite safe to venture out, after three months' rusticating under an assumed name, Clara Langley sailed for home on the Hamburg line. Arriving on her own native soil once more, she went straight to the Jesuit College to interview Father Stacy, an old friend of the family, imploring his advice and council. The only other friend she sought was her mother's old friend, Mrs. Rand (Jean).

Driving at twilight together through the beautiful park, all nature seemed wrapped in sweet repose. The birds had flown to their resting-place. Only the horses' tread was heard, or the splashing of an oar on the lake, as now a row-boat glided softly in sight, then disappeared. After relating some of her varied experiences abroad, Clara exclaimed, "Denmark's rotten! Denmark's rotten! Choose this day whom ye shall serve, God or Mammon! Denmark's rotten!"

"His letters, my dear, would lead one to believe his love was yours alone!" ejaculated Jean. "Don't be too hasty! Realize how the happiness of two lives depends on your action in this matter."

"Yes," responded Clara, quickly. "His letters and conversation speak all of that. But, oh, my dear friend, what mine own eyes have seen! The seed of doubt has been sown in my mind too deep, I fear, to be

erased. It rises continually with a dreadful fear that he would only prove unfaithful to me—unfaithful!" cried Clara. "I could never stand it! It would kill me. The very thought of bearing children to a man untrue is revolting, maddening. I would want my children to move in the same exclusive circles I have ever been accustomed to, and enjoy the same advantages."

"Yes," interrupted Jean, "your children, Clara, dear! That's the mainspring in a woman's life. You would wish them smart and talented, even brilliant, fond of flowers, music, poetry, art, and everything dainty and just so. You would be miserable if things were otherwise."

"Oh, miserable! That would never express my woe!" cried Clara. "Yes, you have struck the keynote of my nature, and my mind regarding just the kind of children I would crave for. But, oh, it is impossible! Denmark's rotten! How could my faintest wish prove a reality and happiness if my husband proved unfaithful?"

"Yes," remarked Jean, "my dear girl, others have built as bright castles as you now build, only to see them dashed against the rocks of experience and disappointment. If you do not feel, Clara, dear, that you can marry and accept the inevitable and varied experience that must and does come into every life without doubting the very step and breath of the one you choose for better or worse, then, my girl, the convent, with its peaceful calm, far from the world and its strife, is the proper place for you. As your adviser,

Father Stacy admits, with your mind looking for perfection in man, without making any allowances for his weakness, or having the charity that covereth a multitude of sins, looking for perfection, only to find each day the tide returns, carrying away on its waves the hopes you fondly cherished. To smile in the face of disappointment, dispair and shattered hopes, this is part of life."

"Oh, I never could live through it!" exclaimed Clara. "Choose this day whom ye shall serve—God or Mammon, master or slave—which shall it be?"

Jean drove Clara to her hotel, then returned in a very thoughtful mood to her own home, reflecting deeply on Clara's conversation.

Next morning, bright and early, Clara drove out to see Father Stacy again, informing him of her intentions to enter the convent. He seemed even disappointed regarding her decision.

"O Father!" she continued, "I have taken your advice, and meditated long and thoughtfully over this matter. I never could stand the imperfection of the world. I am not brave enough to face life's battle outside."

"My child, I hope you have considered the step deeply on all sides," said Father Stacy, in his calm, gentle way. For remember, my child, in every walk of life, be it behind the cloister, or in the busy outside world, wherever the human heart beats and throbs, there you will find sin and imperfection. No one, my child, is perfect. No life or place is void of its sorrow, even though it seems all pleasure. If we do

right, look ever for the bright side—for remember, my child, and weigh it well—no place in this life, no matter how holy, is void of sin and sorrow, of shadow and clouds, which are continually obscuring the sunshine. In this life of continual change we must make the best of each moment. With your youth and wealth to enjoy the world, think well, my child, before taking this step. It means death to the world and a resurrection into another life so vastly different. All are not fitted to serve in its trend, which, believe me, my child, is a strenuous life. Ask earnestly of God to help you battle for the right decision. Your opinion of to-day may be very different to-morrow."

"Oh, I have fought the battle, Father!" cried Clara, "and am convinced it is the only bright star of hope on life's fickle sea for me. Infidelity! O Father, I never could stand it! Yes; I have won the battle; and it is to serve God and not Mammon," said Clara, firmly.

Two weeks later, in a little chapel in the convent of St. Agnes, there walked down the aisle one clothed in all the splendor of a bride—white satin lace and orange blossoms caught up in the delicate folds of the rich tulle veil, which enveloped the bride, falling in graceful folds the length of the train. At the altar she became the bride of the church, leaving the little chapel all wreathed in smiles, only to return a few moments later robed in sombre black. At the little altar rail a coffin stands waiting. In the second ceremony the sombre-robed figure now solemnly renounces the

world, is placed in the coffin and the funeral ceremony preached over her, making her ever after dead to the world.

And this was the initiative ceremony of Clara Langley Millet, now Sister Mary Catherin. Whether happy or otherwise we shall never know, but trust that within that peaceful atmosphere her heart found the sincerity and truth it craved. We only know, after two years, as Sister Mary Catherin, Clara Langley Millet passed out of this life we hope into the realm of perfection and bliss.

Ralston Newbanks never married until years after Clara died. Then, amid palms and orchards, he, an old bachelor, led Rosebud Longworth to the altar as his bride.

Jean had tried her luck in the matrimonial lottery without drawing a prize either time, but consoled herself that at least Edna had been more fortunate in marriage and was happy. For how truly strange the fates rule throughout the scenes! Edna Nash, grown to be a beautiful woman, was visiting in Tacoma when she met Carlton Barnie. He was much older than Edna, but "Cupid," the versatile god, marks his own path to travel in, and this was but another case of love at first sight, ending in a romantic marriage on St. Valentine's Day aboard a private car as it sped across the Rockies to the Pacific Coast, where Carlton Barnie embarked with his young bride for Australia.

THE END.

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